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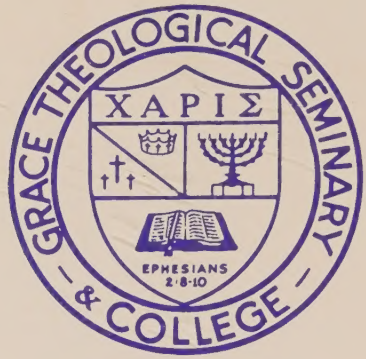

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ANCIENT HEBREW STORIES AND THEIR MODERN INTERPRETATION

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ANCIENT HEBREW STORIES AND THEIR MODERN INTERPRETATION

BY

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To

SIR R. A. BARTRAM,

A DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN OF SUNDERLAND, ENGLAND, THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED, BY THE AUTHOR, IN MEMORY OF A LONG FRIENDSHIP, AND AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF SINCERE APPRECIATION AND ESTEEM.

PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to examine some of the varied and interesting narratives of the Old Testament in the light of modern study, with a view to discovering their original significance and showing their relations to other parts of this great literature. It is quite natural in the atmosphere of our time that the most prominent and attractive feature should be the utterances of the great prophets, the oracles of the men who did so much to lift religion to a higher moral plane and make it a spiritual rather than a magical power. It is said that prophecy is " the heart of the Old Testament," and that statement is true enough, if we remember that the heart, though a central and vital organ, is related to all other parts of the body ; it receives the life-blood and sends it forth again in purer, stronger forms. We will find " prophetic ideas " in earlier stories just as we can trace the influence of prophecy in later history and law. We are concerned with a movement which, when it once began, was continuous and all its parts were woven into a living whole.

When, after long laborious work by scholars, critical studies became available for the student and expositor of Hebrew Literature, the great utterances of the prophets were placed in a clearer historical light, and the light was welcomed as it made their message more intelligible and revealed the greatness of their person-

ality and the range of their influence. Meanwhile the stories caused considerable discussion ; the questions as to their real nature, their historical value and religious significance were both important and difficult. These were bound up with the general question of the position of the Old Testament, as a whole, in the world's historical and religious literature. Christian scholarship may be said to have reached a decision as to the approximate dates of the chief documents ; the literary nature, theological teaching, and religious significance of the important books. These results can be referred to only incidentally in an exposition of this kind, whose chief aim is to investigate the teaching of the narratives. The critical questions are dealt with in histories and commentaries ; many detailed problems are still unsolved, but the research of many workers has led us to see clearly that stories which do not possess literal photographic accuracy have a value of their own, and need not be cast as rubbish to the void. They are records of human thought and life, and when studied separately, or much more in connexion with the great religious movement of which they form a part, they reveal the working of that divine spirit which has led men slowly to larger views of the world and nobler thoughts of God. Though it is difficult to place ourselves in the position of men who centuries ago tried to express in story or in song their ideas of sin and sorrow, of hope and joy, the attempt in a reverent sympathetic spirit will not fail of its reward. Because the writer has found pleasure and profit in this exercise he trusts that others may find helpful stimulus in the results of his meditation. It seemed necessary to write a rather lengthy introduction to provide a sufficient background for the particular expositions. A limited number of

stories from this rich treasury are chosen, but it is hoped that they will give a suggestion of the varied thoughts and feelings that have found expression in stories that are remarkable for their sober simplicity and abiding beauty.

Owing to my distance from England and the shortness of the time available, before publication, it has not been possible for me to receive and examine the proof-sheets. I therefore desire to express to my friend Dr. J. E. McFadyen, of the United Free Church College, Glasgow, my cordial thanks for the time and care that he has, on my behalf, devoted to the work of proof-reading and the preparation of the indexes. I owe much to his sympathy and stimulus during the past twenty years, and, in this case, his willing services, saving labour for myself and time for the publishers, call for this sincere expression of thanks.

W. G. JORDAN.

KINGSTON, ONTARIO.
August 22, 1922.

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible as Literature

For many centuries the Bible was treated by the leaders in the Church almost wholly as a book of revelation, that is, it was regarded simply as a storehouse of theological teaching. The doctrines of the Christian faith were found in all parts of it. The unity which The Book possesses was construed in a rigid, mechanical manner. It was admitted that in the earlier portions the great beliefs concerning sin and redemption were set forth only in a shadowy fashion, in type and symbol. When the Bible was read in that way, devout men found in it a view of God and the world that enlightened their minds and sustained their souls, it stimulated the intellect and quickened the heart. Scholars no doubt at times responded to its beauty of style as well as to its sublimity of thought. But it was the religious rather than the literary appreciation that was predominant. When, by the invention of printing, it could become a popular book the controversies that first raged around it were concerned mainly with ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions, especially with the question "which is the supreme authority, The Church or The Book?" Gradually those who were students, in the special sense, found their interest centred in a different set of questions, viz., What is the

origin and meaning of these varied documents that we call the Old Testament, what is their place in the history of the world's literature? This "critical" study has been diligently pursued by scholarly men in various parts of the world, so that it has become extremely minute and severely technical.[1] Fortunately, at the same time, since the days of Lowth, Lessing, Goethe and Herder, there has been an increased appreciation, in the literary sense, of the ancient poems and histories. As our noble English translation does great justice to the simplicity and strength of the original this appreciation need not be confined to Hebrew scholars.

In 1870 a representative man of science who had little sympathy with theology or "traditions," in defending the use of the Bible in the schools, speaks of the moral beauty and grandeur of this old literature, "and the great historical fact that for three centuries this book has been woven into the life of all that is best and noblest in English history; that it has become the national epic of Britain and is as familiar to noble and simple, from John o' Groat's House to Land's End, as Dante and Tasso once were to the Italians; that it is written in the noblest and purest English, and abounds in exquisite beauties of mere literary form; and, finally, that it forbids the veriest hind who never left his native land to be ignorant of the existence of other countries and other civilizations, and of a great past, stretching back to the farthest limits of the oldest nations of the world. By the study of what other book could children

[1] The minute, exhaustive scrutiny to which untold numbers of Christian scholars in Germany, England and America—the three Bible lands as we may justly call them—are submitting the Old Testament, that little library of books of most varied hue, is astounding. Friedrich Delitzsch, *Babel and Bible*, 1906.

be so much humanized, and made to feel that each figure in the vast historical procession fills, like themselves, but a momentary space in the interval between two eternities and earns the blessings or the curses of all time, according to its efforts to do good and hate evil, even as they also are earning their payment for their work?" [1]

Since that paragraph was written the work of extending "the historical procession" has gone on steadily. In 1906 Dr. F. Delitzsch made the following statement: "The Old Testament formed a world by itself until far into the last century. It spoke of times to whose latest limits the age of classical antiquity barely reached, and of nations that have met either with none or with the most cursory allusion from the Greeks and the Romans. The Bible was the sole source of our knowledge of the history of Hither Asia prior to 550 B.C., and since its vision extended over all that immense quadrangle lying between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf and stretching from Mount Ararat to Ethiopia, it naturally teemed with enigmas that might otherwise have tarried till eternity for their solution. But now the walls that formed the impenetrable background to the scenes of the Old Testament have suddenly fallen, and a keen invigorating air and a flood of light from the Orient pervades and irradiates the hoary book—animating and illuminating it the more as Hebrew antiquity is linked together from beginning to end with Babylonia and Assyria."—*Babel and Bible.*

We will need to refer, in our treatment of the stories, to this "flood of light," but here it is sufficient to say that while we welcome all the light, it does not alter the important fact that during the centuries when these

[1] Professor T. H. Huxley: *Science and Education.*

wonders of Babylon and Egypt were buried below the soil of a desolate land, the Bible gave to the common people of many lands an " historical procession " which taught them to regard the world's life as a movement controlled and guided by the living God.

With regard to the stories more particularly, the English professor has given us a few striking words, which may be quoted, because while they have a personal interest, their real value is in their representative character. Speaking of his grandmother's Bible he says : " There were splendid pictures in it to be sure ; but I recollect little or nothing about them save a portrait of the high priest in his vestments. What come vividly back on my mind are remembrances of my delight in the histories of Joseph and of David ; and of my keen appreciation of the chivalrous kindness of Abraham in his dealings with Lot. Like a sudden flash these return back upon me, my utter scorn of the pettifogging meanness of Jacob, and my sympathetic grief over the heart-breaking lamentation of the cheated Esau, ' Hast thou not a blessing for me also, O my father ? ' " This is true to the experience of many who have had the precious privilege of being familiar with the Bible from their childhood, and one who has continued the study into maturer years may apply to it words used by the same writer in a different connexion, " No man ever understands Shakespeare until he is old, though the youngest may admire him, the reason being that he satisfies the artistic instinct of the young and harmonizes with the ripest and richest experience of the oldest."—*Science and Education*, p. 179. The childlike delight in the stories before the critical faculty awakes and puzzling questions are asked is one thing, and a very precious thing ; but a still richer apprecia-

tion is possible when science has done its work, and sympathetic study has discovered the eternal spirit in these primitive forms.

Frankly we confess that literature for itself, if such a thing is possible, is not for us the supreme and final aim. Real "literature" is an expression of life, a criticism of life, and of a life through which the Divine Spirit is working, revealing those fundamental beliefs and spiritual principles which give meaning and value to the history of mankind. We view the Bible then not as a mere collection of books, but as a great literature, the precipitate from the life of a nation that seemed small and provincial and that by a strange miracle has attained a position of world-wide permanent significance. We treat these stories as a part of that literature which has its own history and that makes its own contribution. Any value that these studies possess will depend upon the success that is achieved in the attempt to show that criticism has not either lessened the interest or destroyed the spiritual value of the ancient stories. Before we come to that, however, certain preliminary questions demand careful attention. The view that in the Bible we have a sketch of the world's history from the time of creation being no longer tenable, we have to inquire how the matter now stands with stories that were once interpreted literally, in accordance with that view. We may recognize the wisdom, skill and faith of the men who used them as a means of placing the life of their own nation in the framework of a world-history; we may investigate, perhaps with only partial success, their origin and meaning before they became part of such history; and finally, the question awaits us, have they any present relation to our own faith and life?

The Documentary Theory

What right have we to adopt this method of procedure? In answering this question it is not necessary to discuss the whole nature and range of modern criticism, or to dwell upon the discoveries in science and ancient history which have transformed the Hebrews into a comparatively modern nation, and removed the beginnings of history into the remote past. Just here, however, it is important to lay emphasis upon one thing, a simple thing, when once it is grasped, but fundamental for our present purpose, namely, that the Pentateuch is compiled from a series of documents, and that almost all the large books of the Old Testament are similar compilations. The method of making books in Palestine two or three thousand years ago differed very much from the modern process. In each age men worked with such material as they possessed, and according to the ideas of their own time. The devout reader can find at the first glance inspiring poems, profitable sermons, and interesting stories; but when he becomes a student in the more systematic sense he begins at once to notice the repetitions, apparent contradictions and frequent lack of smooth connexion. This general impression was created as soon as men began to take a serious interest in the structure of the books, but such a general impression does not carry one very far. By slow careful study a principle of analysis must be discovered, and standards formed by which separate histories and sermons can be placed in their original setting, after being freed from the artificial connexions in which the latest compilers have placed them as well as from later scholastic interpretations. When, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the

suggestion was made, not only that Moses used documents in compiling the book of Genesis, but also that the use of different names for God in different chapters or in different parts of the same chapter, might be *a clue* that could be used in dividing the book into its original elements, *then a new movement began*, order began to appear in what had seemed to be bewildering confusion. This fruitful suggestion gave a start to a special kind of work that has been applied to all the books of the Old Testament. That it has sometimes been carried to extremes is quite true ; it has allowed full play to the eccentricities of individual scholars, and has been marked by the " vigour and rigour " which is so distressing to sensitive souls. We sometimes fear that the atmosphere of the dissecting-room will destroy the beauty and wholesomeness of real life. But we must concede that in spite of the fact that those to whom the sacredness of tradition seems to be the supreme consideration have persistently labelled it " destructive," this " victorious analysis " has pursued its way with fruitful and helpful results, of a really constructive kind. Such books as " Genesis " and " Isaiah " have become new, larger and more vital, as a result of the patient examination of every word and sentence. We are only concerned with this critical work here in so far as it justifies us in treating a particular story as a unity, separating it from its context to see if it did not possess a previous independent life. Men have a right to take to pieces stories that men have joined together, and to claim freedom from the later interpretations and the scholastic theology which was afterwards imposed upon them. The task cannot be perfectly accomplished, and some may think that it is vain to attempt it at all, but if we give way

to fear and timidity many a hopeful enterprise may be wrecked.

The Slow Steady Growth of this Theory

The story how this method of literary analysis grew in precision and power is, in its own way, as interesting as other stories of adventure and progress. Those who look upon it with suspicion, as a weapon of irreverent rationalism, can scarcely do it full justice. In collective investigation, as well as in personal study, it is well to fix the mind on one thing at a time, and we are fortunate if the one thing is the central element of the problem. So it came to pass that men who were really interested in what was even then called "the higher criticism" of the Pentateuch ceased to worry about Moses or any particular author and concentrated their attention on the nature of the book examined as a literary structure. In this case Genesis was the book to be examined. We do not suppose that they were influenced by the fact that comes out so clearly from later and fuller study, viz. that by far the greater part of the Old Testament comes to us from nameless sources; they were simply interested in the question, has this first book of the Bible been put together from a variety of sources? If so, is it possible to find criteria by which to separate them, and when that is done, can we place the separate parts in some kind of historical situation so as to gain light for their interpretation, or receive light from them upon the primitive life of the Hebrew people?

As soon as *one clue* was discovered it was noted that it did not stand alone. Recently considerable discussion has been raised regarding the original clue, the difference in the divine names, the fact that in one

story the name " Yahweh " (LORD), is used and in the other the name " Elohim " (God), the one a personal and the other a general name. It is contended that the text in Genesis, when compared with the ancient versions, is uncertain on this point. That argument might have caused more trouble a hundred years ago, when the original clue was so important; it does not matter so much now when so many other differences between particular narratives have been noted. When we pass from the book of Genesis, we are often left without this sign to guide us, and yet in many cases there is clear evidence that two stories have been blended, and that the separate stories bear indications as to their age which cannot be reconciled with the supposed Mosaic authorship or with any single authorship. Sufficient then to note that the first and most certain sign that was used to suggest the separate origin of the two narratives (The Creation Stories) or the parts of one narrative (e.g. The Flood Story) was that *one* used " Yahweh," the *other* " Elohim " for " God." That fact will always have an interest in the history of criticism, whatever modifications or qualifications have to be introduced. This fruitful suggestion, when taken up by men who were linguists and theologians, was soon set in its proper place as the leading but not the sole sign. It was noted that when a detailed comparison was made between the two Creation Stories, it was clear that each had its own character with respect to vocabulary, style, subject and theology. We had been accustomed to read the book in a way that blinded us to these differences, but when once they were demonstrated it was not possible to deny that between the grand cosmogony of the first chapter of Genesis, and the simple story of the " making " of man, the animals, and

woman in the second, there was the difference between a systematic scientific statement and a poetic primitive story (*see* ch. I). The great world and the transcendent God, in the one case ; in the other the garden prepared for the man and the companion specially created for him. To note only one point here, unless we felt it to be a duty " to reconcile " the two stories, it would be quite evident that in the first account human beings are created " male and female " at the same time, while in the second the creation of " the man " and " the woman " are separate and different processes. Now, however, we have come to rejoice in such differences, as they reveal the rich variety of life and thought out of which these stories arose. " Inspiration " is not cramped and stereotyped ; its very essence is freedom and flexibility, not handling details slavishly but lifting common life into the atmosphere of eternity.

In course of time it was made clear that these two narratives, *and those related to them, in the book of Genesis*, came from two different schools of thought and literature in Israel, separated in their origin and activity by three or four centuries. The Priestly School (formerly called the Elohist) has a slight historical sketch running through Genesis and Exodus but is most largely represented in Numbers and Leviticus. The Yahwist contributes largely to Genesis and Exodus ; whether similar stories in Judges and Samuel should bear the same label is a point too technical for present discussion. A writer of the Priestly School could not use the name " Yahweh " in writing of the creation and the days of the patriarchs, because in his day the theory prevailed that this sacred personal name was not known until revealed by Moses (Exod. vi. 3).

One scholar [1] observed that there was in Genesis a second document or series of narratives which used the name God (Elohim), and has a distinctive style and theology which separates it both from the early Yahwist document and the later Priestly Writing (*Sec.* on Gen. xxii., ch. VII). Strange to say this discovery was neglected for fifty years until another scholar [2] rediscovered the fact and furnished elaborate proofs. Thus there was a " second Elohist," now called simply " The Elohist," and Genesis was resolved into three groups of documents, and after a century of investigation this view began to receive general acceptance among the majority of special students. The book called " Deuteronomy " forms the fourth document of the Pentateuch. The collection or composition of these documents covers roughly a period of five centuries; the whole process was probably completed before the close of the fifth century B.C.

The literature that has grown up around this subject is so extensive that it cannot be discussed here. Attempts have been made, and will continue to be made to discredit the Documentary Theory; since the results of a century of critical work were presented by Kuenen and Wellhausen modifications have been made, detailed problems have been investigated, and the analysis of particular passages carried further. The question of placing labels on chapters or stories may be difficult, for example, in Judges and Samuel; but fortunately it is not essential, so long as we gain a living impression of a continuous movement which reflected itself in literature and so has left reliable memorials of

[1] Ilgen.

[2] Hupfeld: Cf. The neglect of Mendel's Law for thirty-five years.

the life and thought of different periods. We cannot regard real life at any time as possessing an abstract simplicity. The prophetic and priestly influences existed side by side in early time; the moral and ritual elements were there, sometimes combined and sometimes in conflict. But there is such a thing as *history*, not a mere record of facts but the story of a living movement. And there is no likelihood that the sense of progress and perspective given to us by modern criticism will be lost. It is possible to meet from defenders of the traditional view the charge that it is the perverse cleverness of critics, as expressed in the Documentary Theory, that has created nearly all the difficulties that arise in connexion with the study of the Pentateuch.[1] That view, however, rests upon a very imperfect knowledge of the critical situation before the discovery of "the clue." Men were well aware of the facts, and saw clearly the difficulty of reconciling apparent contradictions and divergent traditions. The *two things* were well known: (1) the evidences of compilation, and (2) the use of different divine names in different parts of Scripture; *it was when these two facts were brought into living relation* that new light was thrown upon the structure of the books, and the new form of analysis began to show rich results. Scholars became aware of other "clues" and sought to place the various histories and prophecies in their proper setting, and while this cannot always be accomplished with perfect security, it is the best method at our disposal and tends to increase our knowledge and appreciation of this varied literature.

We need not enter at any length into the question of the Deuteronomic school, it has exerted very slight

[1] Kyle: *The Problem of The Pentateuch.*

influence on Genesis and is not connected directly with the stories that form the main part of our subject. Its influence, however, from the beginning of the sixth century B.C. is considerable, as men of that school edited many of the earlier histories. Deuteronomy is a repetition and amplification of earlier histories and laws that are already found in the Book of Exodus. Its original element is the wonderful persuasive power with which it applies the lessons of history and the demands of law to the life of the Hebrew people. It marked a new epoch, but the material for our exposition is mainly pre-Deuteronomic.

The Significance of the Critical Process

It is well that the full significance of all this should be clearly understood. The view as to the origin and authorship of the first five books of the Bible which existed for centuries, as a mere tradition, at a time when the Church was not interested in such questions, meant that those five books, with all the varied histories and laws, were written in one generation, by one man who never crossed the Jordan, and who consequently never knew anything about the life of the Hebrews in Western Palestine. That meant that the books came from God through an inspired prophet but in their origin they had no relation to the life and career of the Hebrew nation in Palestine. The view now accepted means that "the documents" belong to different periods of Hebrew history and show how the teachers and people were gradually led to nobler thoughts of God and larger conceptions of their own mission. This difference between the two views is of immense importance to the expositor; the message that appealed most powerfully to its own time is

most likely to have an abiding life and a permanent power. Hence our interest in seeking the original meaning.

Since " the documentary theory " appeared in this form further study has led to modifications which, while they break down sharp divisions, such as are found in the first sketch of any great subject, do not destroy the essential features of the theory. Each document is now seen to have its own history, a history which like all living processes must have been highly complex. Many stories must have existed separately before being brought, first into a particular cycle, and then into the final document. The latest document can contain early material; and a narrative preserved in such a document may have passed through several stages before it reached its final condition. It is no reproach to scholars that they could not anticipate the results of explorations that had not come to light in their time; they did their work well, but it is not given to men to anticipate the future in any large measure or to reach finality. With many particular problems still to be solved, the way has been prepared for a rational reverent study of the ancient Scriptures which may render real service to religion as well as to knowledge. If the books were put together in some such way as has been suggested then we claim that an analysis which helps us to the understanding of particular parts is justified, and should be used in careful exposition.

The Primitive History

This short section Gen. i.–xi. gives the history of the world from its creation until the days of Shem, the son of Noah, then a concise genealogical list is

supplied connecting Shem with Abraham, and so the transition is made to the Patriarchal Stories which fill the remainder of the book. According to the traditional chronology the Deluge came 1,656 years after the creation. (The Greek text has 2,442 years.) This chronology is, of course, Jewish science now quite out of date. The earliest stories have no chronology, they are told as something that happened in the indefinite past. This elaborate chronology begins in the fifth chapter and belongs to the "Priestly Code," the latest of the documents. This document is the first to turn the Hebrew word *adam* (man) into a proper name, Adam (*see* Gen. v. 1); so the traditional belief of a world about 6,000 years old, whose first inhabitant was a definite individual named Adam, rests upon the latest document, and is linked to a chronology that was devised by Jewish scholars about 500 B.C. The smallness of the scheme is a reflection of the smallness of the nation, its lack of any long historical perspective or large world-outlook. Now we have abundant evidence to show that long before Israel existed as a nation the great Empires of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria had learned to look into a more distant past, possessed elaborate records, and a chronology that was systematic and in some respects scientific. The Jewish chronology grew gradually and corresponded to the intellectual needs of the people; it had its own development within the nation. The fact that priests in Egypt and Babylon tried to keep accurate chronicles of events thousands of years before the Hebrews came into Palestine is a fact quite independent of the life of Israel. Each nation has its own character, and the glory of Israel is that though subject to powerful foreign influences and com-

pelled to "borrow" or appropriate many things, it preserved throughout its spiritual independence the mark of a divine vocation. It had its own simple reckoning, the early popular stories are without dates, then such connecting links were introduced as "two years before the earthquake" (Amos i. 1), "In the year that King Uzziah died" (Isa. vi. 1). This kind of reckoning might suffice for a small nation living largely within itself, but the time came when the history of the nation must be treated as a part of the history of the whole world.

Babylonian Influence in the Early Chapters

These eleven chapters are the result of such treatment, and in the short space of this "Primitive History" the influence of Babylon can be traced more fully than elsewhere. And here we meet all those peculiarities of ancient literature which demand from the student exercise of so much patience, skill, and ingenuity, viz. repetitions, duplications, "contradictions," two narratives of the same subject placed side by side (chs. I, II); two stories blended into one for the purpose of preserving the best in both (chs. VI–IX); the picturesque poetic stories of the Yahwist, and the slight history and elaborate genealogies of the Priestly writer are woven together. Two accounts of creation are there, two Cains, the murderer doomed to nomadic life, and the city builder; two Noahs, the hero of the flood, and the inventor of vine culture; two views of the dispersion of mankind. Questions arise as to the existence of different strata or recensions even within the short stories; and whether the relatively large section, the description of the Deluge, is not an interpolation that breaks the present con-

nexion. Such points can only be fully considered in learned commentaries; they are important and interesting, but they may become a danger to the expositor if they cause the intellect to cripple the imagination. When we allow the dust of controversy to settle we can see clearly that great outstanding principles remain.

A Small Nation Attempts a Great Task

Looking at this subject in the fuller light of to-day we are amazed at the small equipment with which such a great task was attempted; a half-dozen short stories and a few enigmatic names are used to fill the gap between the creation of the world and the ancestors of the Hebrew race! It is evident that to act as world-historian was not Israel's special mission, but she must attend to her own needs when she realizes that a place in the great world awaits her. The time came when her teachers could claim that God created the world in order to start the Hebrews on their great career; for them all else was preliminary and incidental. The modern history of the ancient pre-Mosaic world is continually growing in extent and importance, it is forming large new libraries of its own. But all that the Hebrews could spare was a few pages, and it was enough. The book that was destined to become a Bible for humanity could not afford room for much baggage of that kind to carry down the centuries and around the world.[1] These few fragments are precious and will repay our sympathetic study; the idea, the faith that the God of the Hebrews is the God of the world, that from the beginning His Providence has

[1] Dr. Moffatt describes *The New Testament* as *The smallest religious classic of the great religions.*

watched over the life of man, and prepared a special place for the preachers of righteousness—this idea receives its perfect expression in later time, but it dominates the whole book.

The scantiness, the poverty of the material, is itself a proof that the Hebrews were not a highly civilized people in the same sense as the learned classes of Egypt and Babylon. They were originally semi-nomads, they had to fight their way into Palestine, and the effort to secure a settled abode, a united kingdom, meant sustained and arduous struggles through many generations. They became attached to and rooted in the soil of Palestine, the wandering life of the desert left its traces, but for the majority it gradually lost its attraction ; to sit without fear under his own vine and figtree was the ideal that even a brave man might cherish. Palestine before they came was a civilized country in the sense of possessing cities with things convenient for the simple life of that time. There were fenced cities for protection in time of war, sanctuaries with their own priests and traditions, substantial houses, useful implements and artistic ornaments. In many cases luxury and licentiousness had corrupted the lives of the Canaanite inhabitants and they were not fit to stand against the hardy invaders from the desert. The Hebrews no doubt appropriated much of this " culture " and yielded to many of its temptations, but the temper of their religion was to some extent " puritanic," though it was only the few extremists who clung to tent-dwellings and demanded complete abstinence from the fruit of the vine. The people, as a whole, became Palestinians and adopted the sanctuaries, the laws and customs and " the folk-lore " of the land.

Is there a Polemic against "Civilization"?

The question is raised as to how far there is in this history (Gen. i.–xi.), a direct polemic against culture, which may mean simply the revolt of a stern, simple people against luxury, novelties and excesses. The question comes up in the treatment of the different stories as well as in the arrangement of the whole section. It may be answered in various ways according to one's understanding of it, and according to one's view of the life of the Hebrew people and the temper of their religion.[1]

It is through a small people that God has given to the world the greatest moral lessons and the highest religious revelation; among a small people surrounded by great warring nations, with their military display and pompous idolatries, there was sure to arise a feeling that "the powers of the world" are heathenish and hostile to God. A king in Israel instead of being reverenced as "the Lord's anointed" may be regarded as an imitation of the foolish pride and splendour of nations that know not God. This tiny nation could only gain an independent existence at a period when the two great Oriental empires were compelled for a time to limit their aggressive imperial activities; and after the first brilliant achievement of the kingdom with its conquests and splendour, it became the prey of the great civilized nations, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, until its body was broken and its soul went forth to suffer and to conquer a spiritual kingdom. Little wonder if there grew up a conviction that religion and culture are hostile to each other, especially when we remember that it was the coarsest side of

[1] *See* chapter V.

civilization that was presented to them, military arrogance and cruelty, not at any time a manifestation of "sweetness and light."

But when we go back to primitive times we find remains of what we are inclined to call the "pagan" idea of the jealousy of the gods. The god is proud and in his kingship will brook no rival near the throne, he hates specially man's arrogance, and to those who are carried away by their power and success he sends disaster. In the stories of Paradise, the Flood and the Tower of Babel suggestions of this kind may be found. "Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad." This is a fact of life to be seen in all ages on a small personal or large national scale. Our modern explanations are different; we endeavour to find in such examples a reasonable law of God, and not mere arbitrary action springing from personal jealousy. The great prophets learned in large measure to transform this ancient view of the jealous god into the righteous anger of the Divine King, against the stupid arrogance and cruel pride of selfish men. (Cf. the Teaching of Isaiah ii., iii.)

Further there is to be considered the natural conservatism common in all ages, and especially those which have strong traditions, and deep religious convictions. This natural feeling has often been reinforced by theology and religion in its resistance to change. The flint knives remain as instruments of the priest when common men have learned to use more effective instruments. Change in the form or material of the altar was strongly opposed; it was felt that in religious exercises the ancient simplicity should be preserved. Horses and chariots might be terribly effective in war; but the danger was great that men would trust in them

instead of in God. When we are almost swept away by the careless driver of a modern motor-car we can sympathize with such feelings ; the new machine seems to be the incarnation of brutal recklessness. On quiet reflection we remember that it may be necessary for more efficient work, and have its beneficent uses.

The ancient Hebrews were not an inventive people ; the world owes to them no discovery in science, no improvement in mechanism or in social organization ; the gift that came through them was a simple faith in the one God and a purer spirit of worship. But in the centuries through which this gift revealed its real presence and divine power it could grow only by claiming for God things that had been saturated with " heathenism " ; it was a process of conflict and conquest, always with a certain sharpness and narrowness but yet unconsciously absorbing, increasing in real breadth and depth. They could not meet our problems or anticipate the exact nature of our questions, but their most enlightened men may have had a presentiment that we cannot all go back to the rustic simple life, but must learn to carry the divine spirit into larger spaces and more complex conditions.

" Folk-lore in the Old Testament."

The purpose of this volume does not allow much space to be devoted to what we may call the background of Hebrew religion and literature, though it is evident that a very real background existed and is most likely to be discernible, even if dimly, in the ancient stories. " Behind their positive religion lies the old unconscious religious tradition, the body of religious usage and belief, which cannot be traced to the influence of individual minds, and was not pro-

pagated on individual authority, but formed part of that inheritance from the past into which successive generations of the Semitic race grew up as it were instinctively, taking it as a matter of course that they should believe and act as their fathers had done before them. The positive Semitic religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam) had to establish themselves on ground already occupied by these older beliefs and usages; they had to displace what they could not assimilate, and whether they rejected or absorbed the elements of the older religion, they had at every point to reckon with them and take up a definite attitude towards them" (*The Religion of the Semites*. W. Robertson Smith, pp. 1, 2).

In the prophets and the law there are distinct denunciations and prohibitions of ancient customs that had come to be regarded as "heathenish," or "superstitious," but in the stories the relation is different, it is often a case of dim reminiscence or faint allusion. Our concern with such allusions, whether clear or doubtful, is not direct as we are not investigating comparative folk-lore but attempting an exposition that, while avoiding the temptation to "read into" the stories our later theology, yet seeks to give prominence to the higher elements which prepared the way for our nobler faith. The book recently published by Sir. J. G. Frazer, under the above title, a book in three large volumes with a total of about 1,800 pages, deals with "Folk-lore in the Old Testament," but also with folk-lore in all parts of the world. It cannot be reviewed in a brief space, but must be regarded as an encyclopædia of this kind of lore. As a specimen of the scale of treatment and the wide range of the book, it is sufficient to mention the fact that 281 pages are

devoted to the discussion of the narrative in Gen. vi.–ix., and the Flood Stories of the world. Such exhaustive treatment by a man who has devoted so much time and skill to similar subjects must be interesting even though there is so much that is speculative and uncertain. The method of approach by the folklorist and the theologian is from quite opposite directions, and with different aims. In this modest volume we are seeking in the old stories the germs and suggestions of the higher teaching which later became explicit in the prophetic sermons, and in the reasonings of the "wise men." But we must not forget the original background and the survival of "superstitions." To one whose chief interest is in the most primitive types of thought and the resemblances found in the crude religious customs of various tribes and races, we may seem to exaggerate the faint gleams of pure light which prophesy a brilliant future. This higher side of Hebrew life and thought is clearly and generously recognized by the distinguished author of this monumental work, in the following eloquent passage, the closing words of his preface:

"The scope of my work has obliged me to dwell chiefly on the lower side of ancient Hebrew life revealed in the Old Testament, on the traces of savagery and superstition. But to do so is not to ignore, far less to disparage that higher side of the Hebrew genius which has manifested itself in a spiritual religion and a pure morality, of which the Old Testament is the imperishable monument. On the contrary, the revelation of the baser elements which underlay the civilization of ancient Israel, as they underlie the civilization of modern Europe, serves rather as a foil to enhance by contrast the glory of a people, which from such

dark depths of ignorance and cruelty, could rise to such bright heights of wisdom and virtue, as sunbeams appear to shine with a greater effulgence of beauty when they break through the murky clouds of a winter evening than when they flood the earth from the serene splendour of a summer noon. The annals of savagery and superstition unfortunately compose a large part of human literature; but in what other volume shall we find side by side with that melancholy record, psalmists who poured forth their sweet and solemn strains of meditative piety in the solitude of the hills or in green pastures beside still waters; prophets who lit up their beatific visions of a blissful future with the glow of an impassioned imagination; historians who bequeathed to distant ages the scenes of a remote past embalmed for ever in the amber of a pellucid style. These are the true glories of the Old Testament and of Israel; these, we trust and believe, will live to enlighten and inspire mankind—when the conditions recorded alike in sacred and profane literature shall have been purged away in a nobler humanity of the future."

These are true and eloquent words, from the pen of an able scholar and brilliant writer; they remind us that civilization has "a background," often dark and revolting; it is not an idyllic condition of nature which we can use in our indictments against the failures in our modern life, with its grinding competition, its wretched poverty, and bitter conflicts of class and race. Time has a softening influence, it leaves noble monuments from the past in stone, in song and story, but allows us largely to forget the miseries and struggles which formed the realities of life for millions of toiling, suffering slaves. With

regard to the background of Hebrew religion, not only has this kindly influence been at work, it has been aided by the definite action of men who wished to forget rather than to remember "the pit out of which they had been digged." On this specific point, a further quotation from Sir J. G. Frazer may be permitted; referring to the magical power associated with the mandrakes, of which there is no trace in the present text of Gen. xxx., he says: "For a comparison of early Hebrew tradition with their Babylonian counterparts enables us to appreciate how carefully the authors or editors of Genesis have pruned away the extravagant elements of legend and myth, how skilfully they have uprooted the weeds and left the flowers in the garden of literature, how deftly they have refined away the dross and kept the pure gold in the casket of history." And pointing out that the same process has been at work on the Homeric poems, he concludes: "And in both cases the fine literary instinct rests upon and presupposes a fine moral instinct, which chooses the good and rejects the evil, and fusing the chosen elements in the crucible of imagination, moulds them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection." (F. L. in *The Old Testament, II*, p. 895).

In the course of our study we may meet with many illustrations of this fact, and be reminded that it was the influence of a growing movement that expressed itself in the nobler spirits of that age. It is difficult now to understand the position of those who think that such investigations are irreverent, as if the Hebrews had been, from the first moment of their separate history, miraculously and mechanically lifted out of the past life of humanity, in which the Semitic

race was so deeply rooted. The study of "origins" need not necessarily be a mere scholastic exercise, antiquarian research into old customs and strange survivals; it may help us to realize the tenacity of fundamental religious ideas, and the varied forms that these ideas may assume, as humanity makes its long unwearied search after goodness and God. Let us be glad then that behind many a simple story, to which we assign a definite date, there lies a dim historical background, so that even things that have been forgotten or suppressed have left their influence in a mysterious fashion, and have given a real strength and a mystic beauty to stories which at first glance seem to have as their chief and only virtue an artless simplicity. Saturated with the rich life of primitive times, suggestions of their early significance still linger because no process save utter destruction could completely "wash them out."

Mythology in the Old Testament

It is unfortunate that in popular use the word "myth" has acquired the meaning of fiction or falsehood. The popular use has certainly wandered far from the scientific sense. Mythology is now the subject of serious study, with an extensive literature and varied shades of thought and interpretation. After what has been said on "folk-lore," to which it is closely related, an elaborate discussion is not needed, because as a matter of fact there is scarcely any "pure" mythology in the Old Testament. There are mythical allusions forming the background of some stories, or appearing as features of poetic decoration, even in later writers. The myth is narrative in form but it is not, like a *fable* or parable, the result of the conscious

invention or purpose of a particular author. The most elaborate myths have passed through several stages and received many additions. It is at first a story about the gods or divine heroes, their activities in the heavens, or on the earth, their councils, adventures and conflicts. This is the form, but myths come from a time when our divisions of the forms of thought into prose and poetry, fact and fiction, science and theology, had not yet been reached. The substance of the myth, in spite of the personal narrative form, represents the thoughts of men in the early days concerning the world in which they lived. "Barbarian man imagines everything in the universe to possess a quality of life akin to that with which he is himself endowed. Thus in rivers, trees, heavenly bodies, and other objects which possess more or less the power of movement, he sees beings gifted with life. There are whisperings in the winds, the rivers prophesy as did the Peruvian Rimac, the trees are the prisons of powerful enchanters, who moan from the place of their confinement. The entire universe then is a spirit-peopled one. This belief is known as animism" (*Everyman's Encyclopædia*). This represents the earliest atmosphere, but in the elaborate mythologies of Babylon and Egypt we have advanced beyond this, the stories have taken up into themselves the beginnings of science and reflect systematic observation of sun, moon and stars, of winds and floods. Different forms of mythology were mingled and later reflected political movements as well as impressions from natural phenomena. For the rich stories of ancient mythology let the reader turn to the histories of Babylonia and Egypt, there he will find a luxuriant growth that to the Western mind and the modern taste seems wild and grotesque.

Polytheism is the real life of such systems ; it may be a reflection of the varied forces of nature, but it is in the form of the activity of the gods, many gods who carry on secret intrigues and open battles. " Notwithstanding all this, however, and despite the fact that many liberal and enlightened minds openly advocated the doctrine that Nergal and Nebo, that the moon-god and the sun-god, the god of thunder, Ramman and all the rest of the Babylonian Pantheon were one in Marduk, the god of light, still polytheism, gross polytheism, remained for *three thousand years* the Babylonian State religion, etc." (*Babel and Bible*, p. 65).

In spite of efforts towards monotheism, speculative and political, it was the same in Egypt. The names of over 2,000 gods and goddesses have been discovered, and it is thought that many have been lost. It would be almost impossible for the thought of one supreme being to live with such a host of divinities. " Each local deity of former ages still survived in the confused list of gods and goddesses, which had become mingled in a complex mythology, when the mingling people were no longer able to distinguish the attribute of individual deities. But the great towns of former times still claimed their original presiding deities, whose power was manifested by the continued or increasing importance of the place itself."

The mythology of Egypt is ancient and luxuriant, its prominent figures appear in varied forms and changing combinations. The stories of the gods have a long history, and in later stages conflict and confusion arise through the attempts to harmonize and unify the activities of the greater gods. The following brief statement shows the nature of these legends. " Isis,

the most famous goddess of Egypt, the wife and sister of Osiris, had many beautiful legends attached to her name. One of the stories of her love for Osiris and the finding of his body may be briefly told : Set, the wicked one, the god of evil, killed Osiris and divided his body into fourteen pieces ; Isis wandered over the earth until all the parts of her husband's body were found. During her wanderings Horus, her divine son, was born. The holy child, under the instructions of his devoted mother, performed certain ceremonies over his father's burial, assisting in raising him from the dead ; from that time on Osiris became the King of Amenti, the underworld, the land of hopes and dreams. The worship of the gentle mother Isis increased gradually, spreading at last to Rome and Greece. She became the goddess of the underworld, of life, of magic, and of healing." (*Everyman's Encyclopædia*). Such stories were told in simple beautiful forms, susceptible of various interpretations and capable of reflecting common sorrows and joys, fears and hopes. It is thought that they contained a kind of gospel for the poor peasants whose life in that land of stately palaces and majestic pyramids was slavish and sordid. But, when one attempts to read the various stories and separate the character and functions of the different gods, it is an almost impossible task. "As we examine Egyptian religion in its earliest surviving documents, it is evident that two great phenomena of nature had made the most profound impression upon the Nile dwellers, and that the gods discerned in these two phenomena dominated religious and intellectual development from the earliest times. These are the sun and the Nile. In the sun-god Re, Atum, Horus, Khepri, and in the Nile, Osiris, we find the great gods of Egyptian life and thought, who

almost from the beginning entered upon a rivalry for the highest place in the religion of Egypt—a rivalry which ceased only with the annihilation of Egyptian religion at the close of the fifth century of the Christian era. He who knows the essentials of the story of the long rivalry will know the main course of the history of Egyptian religion, not to say one of the most important chapters in the history of the early East" (Breasted's *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, p. 9). We can accept that statement on the strength of a specialist in that department, but if we attempt to go further, we soon learn that it is a long history and a very complicated process.

The case in Babylonia was similar; it was a *polytheistic* system where the gods of rival provinces and cities had fought for the first place, but where no one of these had succeeded in gaining a steady and permanent pre-eminence. We turn aside from these great wide-spreading empires, the homes of the earliest civilization, with their vast populations, their elaborate military and social organizations, their large armies maintained for defence and conquest, their magnificent temples which served as places of worship and centres of literary activity. We come back to Palestine, a small land with its hills and dales nourished by the sun and rain, not traversed by great rivers and not needing the artificial canals. The Hebrews came into the country about 1300 B.C., into a land that for centuries had felt the influence of the two great empires between which it holds its fateful position. The people must conquer their homes and learn "the culture" of the land, in both the literal and spiritual sense. Songs and stories of their own as well as others acquired in their new surroundings no doubt circulated among them, but we

must not forget that they were a small people with scanty resources and a limited outlook; it is a small book that they have left us, small in size but of tremendous importance. Their literary activity probably received an impetus in the peaceful days of Solomon; he, their king, dreamed of empire and Oriental splendour, and the result was to break up the political kingdom and to throw them again into a state of confusion, so that a large share of their energies was absorbed in their new political and social problems.

Traces of polytheism we may find, and even after the Hebrews began to believe in only one God for the whole nation, old tribal customs and beliefs would remain within the family and clan. The direction, however, was towards monolatry and monotheism and that tends to destroy the myth-building fancy. The simplicity and soberness of the Hebrew mind was also unfavourable to the growth of a native mythology. There is a certain bareness in their life that speaks of the desert; the kind of controversy into which they were soon plunged, viz. whether the fertilizing rain came from the local Baals of Palestine, or from their own God Yahweh, was a clear simple issue; it called for definite thought and strong conviction rather than poetic extravagances. "In the life of many people and also in the Old Testament the hour comes when the child-like animating of realities by the figures of phantasy ceases, because they have learned to consider things more carefully and to regard themselves less as the measure of all things. Especially in the Old Testament the myth-forming phantasy seems to have died early. The energetic movement of piety towards one God, which marked out the Old Testament religion from the beginning, was not favourable to the creation

of stories about the stars. Indeed, the myths would have quite died away from the Old Testament, even as in our own times, if it were not for the joy that the artist finds in their rich colours, and the way in which he uses them for the adornment of his own poetry ; and if with the more sober consideration of reality, there had not at the same time arisen a new need for whose contentment a welcome material was offered in the stories of the fathers that had now lost their object." [1] In other words, the increase of reflection and the growing sense of *one* creator, responsible for *all* forms of life, tended to disestablish and destroy many minor gods, they lost their parts and disappeared from the stage, but faint reminiscences of this mythical stage still tinged the ancient stories.

The one ancient piece of pure mythology that has survived is found in Gen. vi. 1–4. It is a " fragment " and stands with no real connexion, a strange survival from earlier times and an alien atmosphere. " Narratives which deal with gods or sons of gods are in their nature mythological and probably had their origin outside of Israel. This story is genuine mythology, the demi-gods take to themselves earthly maidens as wives, many parallels to this are found in Greek. From Israel we have of this kind of story only this one fragment ; the later development of religion has crushed out mythology in Israel and left standing only quite small remnants as milestones on the road that has been traversed " (Gunkel). It is such a remarkable survival that there is no wonder that attempts have been made to soften it, or explain it away. For example, that " sons of God " means good men or Sethites who wedded Cainite women, and that the hundred and

[1] H. Schmidt.

twenty years is the period between this sinful conduct and the coming of the Deluge. That kind of "apologetic" is now regarded as unnecessary and futile. This fragment is probably in the first place an abbreviation of a fuller narrative, and more than one effort may have been made to tone it down without casting it altogether to one side. Even in these few verses there are linguistic difficulties and the connexion within the short passage is not quite smooth. (For variations in the translation of important words, see the margin of R.V.) Perhaps the latest addition to it was the phrase that hangs on loosely, "and also after that" (*v.* 4), which reminds the readers that these *Nephilim* or giants lived at a later time and are mentioned elsewhere. (Num. xiii. 33; Ezek. xxxii. 27 (?)). No definite date can be given for such a story, it happened at a time when the population was growing rapidly and when the earthly and heavenly spheres were nearer together than they are now; the angels came upon the earth and exercised their power in pride and lustfulness. Giants were born as the result of this unnatural union and the life of men that might have been much longer, if not eternal, was reduced to the modest scale of 120 years. One would have expected before the decree of punishment a story of how men increased, not only in numbers, but in arrogant wickedness, and how these gods imparted secrets which enabled men to conquer the forces of nature and increase the comforts of life. For that we must turn to later apocalyptic literature where "the fallen angels" reappear; their punishment is referred to in the New Testament (2 Peter ii. 4; Jude 6, Isa. xxiv. 21, 22).

The piece may have been retained because of a supposed connexion with the great world-catastrophe

that now follows it, or because it taught the supremacy of Yahweh and his anger against the pride of lower creatures, men or angels, but all the purpose that it now serves is to remind us of the great struggles through which men in all nations have had to pass in the search after a purer and nobler view of God.

The very pleasant beautiful story in Genesis xviii. 1–5 is quite different in its tone and temper, but in all probability it goes back to earlier times before severe monotheism was the order of the day. The special feature is not the play upon the name of Isaac, the "laughter" of incredulity; that is found elsewhere (xvii. 17: cf. xxi. 6), nor the religious feast under the sacred trees near Hebron, but in this case a much later writer has seized the real lesson, "Forget not to show love unto strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2). *Unawares* is the keynote: when Abraham sitting at the door of his tent suddenly looked up and saw three men, he greeted courteously men who were perfect strangers to him, and cordially invited them to stay for rest and refreshment. It is a perfect picture of spontaneous generous hospitality; to these strangers he offers his best, and renders his personal service. It is only by the bearing of the guests and the promise of a rich reward that suspicion must have been aroused as to the rank of these visitors. Unbelief is met and rebuked by the question, "Is anything too wonderful for Yahweh?" Even then we have no comment from Abraham and his wife on the strange conduct of their visitors. It is a long way from this to the great word of our Lord, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me." But there is a prophecy of the same spirit of humanity. It would be

a matter of course to give a handsome gift to one recognized as a god, but to treat strangers kindly without desire or hope of reward, and then to learn that angel visitors have passed by, that is a part of the mystery and surprise of a noble life.

The Question of Egyptian Influence

After much research and keen controversy Babylonian influence is proved, though among scholars there may be slight differences as to the extent, time and manner of this influence.[1] Into the question of similar influence from the region of the Nile we cannot enter further than to record the general impression that it does not stand on the same footing. It was not the same sharp definite kind and has not left such clear specific results. How far this judgment will be modified by the results of recent researches is a question that will receive the careful consideration of special students. One illustration that seems to be accepted by many may be used here, especially as it is made the basis for more important suggestions.[2] "After centuries of circulation in Egypt, the tale picturing the trial of a good youth, as we have it in the Story of the Two Brothers, passed down into Palestine, to be incorporated in the mosaic which has descended to us as the story of Joseph." "The two gods who appear as the chief characters in the tale are pictured in the naïve imagination of the folk as two peasants, whose names Anubis and Bata, have disclosed them as gods

[1] See the *Religion of Ancient Palestine*, by Stanley A. Cook, M.A.

[2] The following quotations are from Dr. Breasted's volume on *Development of Religion*, etc. *See also* his *History of Ancient Egypt*, p. 168.

of the town of Kasa, who had a place in the religion of Egypt at an enormously remote date. Anubis, the elder brother, is married; Bata, the younger, lives with them almost as their son, when the idyllic round of picturesque rustic life is for ever ended by an attempt on the part of the wife, enamoured of the younger brother, to establish improper relations with him. The youth indignantly refuses, exemplifying the current wisdom of the wise man as we have already met it. The incident later found place in the Hebrew tradition of Joseph in Egypt. Deceived by his wife into believing a perverted version of the affair foisted upon him by the false woman, Anubis lies in wait to slay his brother. Warned by his cattle, however, the youth flees, and his brother's pursuit is cut off by the Sun-god, who places between them a torrent filled with crocodiles. Then Bata, calling upon the Sun-god, who 'distinguisheth between good and evil,' to judge between them, reproaches his brother with his easy credulity as they converse across the stream and tells him that all is now over. As for the youth himself, he must depart to the 'Valley of the Cedar,' a place that must have been on the Phœnician coast, as there were no cedars in Egypt. There he will await the coming of Anubis to succour him, whenever Anubis observes commotion in the jar of beer which he drinks. Anubis returns and slays his unfaithful wife, while the youth wanders on to the Valley of the Cedar. Maintaining himself there as a hunter, the Sun-god sends him a beautiful wife to solace his loneliness. Although she escapes the sea that would have carried her away, a stray lock of her perfumed hair wandering into Egypt betrays her to the Pharaoh, who searches for her far and wide, and, like Cinderella, she is at last brought

to the palace. She at once prays the King to send emissaries to cut down the cedar with which the life of Bata, her husband, is mysteriously involved. When this is done Bata falls dead and his treacherous wife feels free to live in splendour at the Court. Then Bata's brother Anubis observes a commotion in the beer he is drinking, and sets out at once to search for Bata, whose body he soon finds in the 'Valley of the Cedar.' For three years he sought the cedar blossom in which was the soul of Bata, and, wearying, he was about to return to Egypt, when in the fourth year, as he was walking by the cedar, he chanced upon it. Then he hastened to place it in a jar of water, and having given the water to Bata to drink, his dead brother revived, and they embraced each other and talked together. Bata now informed his brother that he must assume the form of a sacred bull, and going in this guise to the court, he will reckon with the faithless beauty whom the gods gave him. But the court beauty compasses the death of the bull, and from his blood which spatters the door-post of the palace two beautiful persea-trees spring up, one on either side of the doorway. When the Pharaoh's favourite induces him to cut them down, a chip from one of them flies into her mouth, and as a result she bears a son who proves to be Bata himself. The Pharaoh makes him heir to the throne, to which Bata finally succeeds, and after a long and happy reign is followed as king by his brother the faithful Anubis."

This is certainly a wonderful story and no doubt has many features full of interest to the special student of Egyptian mythology. But the contact with the incident in the Joseph stories (Gen. xxxix.) is extremely slight and is not a secure foundation upon which to build far-

reaching results. The stories gathered round the name of Joseph are models of interesting narration; this scene in particular is splendidly painted, detailed but not diffuse, handling an awkward situation in a delicate manner. Whatever poetic decorations they may have received or whatever romantic elements they may have absorbed the Biblical Stories are still human, it is in the common motives and passions of human life that their real interest is found, and not in any mythological symbols. Men capable of writing such a scene would scarcely need "to borrow" the central motive, when they wished to show Joseph's loyalty to his master and his firmness in the hour of temptation.[1]

Mythology in Hebrew Poetry

The allusions to mythology and folk-lore in Hebrew poetry are comparatively so few or so thoroughly "washed out" that they are a testimony to the influence of the growing belief in one God who is supreme over all the forces of the world. The poet of the book of Job wrote at a time when for Israel the stars had long ceased to be gods.

"When the morning stars sang together,
And the sons of God shouted for joy.
God spake to the sea,
And said, Hitherto shalt thou come but no further,
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

To us these words express merely the thought that the God of Israel created the world and rules the restless

[1] Gunkel, *Urgeschichte*, etc., refers to this "motive" in Greek, Indian and Persian Literature. Cf. *Morgenstern*, p. 289. "Certainly the episode of Potiphar's wife is borrowed directly from Egyptian literature."

sea. But behind, a long way behind, is the remembrance of the primeval conflict between the God of light, originally Marduk or other Babylonian God, and the great monster of the deep (Job xxxviii. 7, 11). The form of the poet's bitter complaint arrests our attention :

"Am I a sea, or a sea-monster,
That thou settest a watch over me?" (vii. 12.)

"The connexion shows that the reference is to the half-poetical, half-mythological conception of the raging sea itself as a furious monster" (Dr. A. B. Davidson), and on iii. 7, 8 and xxvi. 12, 13. "In both passages in Job there is an allusion to the popular mythology, according to which the darkening or eclipse of the sun and moon was caused by the serpent throwing its folds around them or swallowing them up. In its origin this mythology is probably nothing more than a stroke of the poetic imagination which turned the dark cloud or eclipsing shadow into a huge Dragon. Enchanters were supposed to have the power to set this dragon in motion, and cause the lights of day and night to be swallowed up." (*See also* Isa. xxx. 7; li. 9, 10.)

Ezekiel is the most Oriental of the poets in his literary style, remarkable for its gorgeous imagery and its elaborate, obscure symbolism. The passage xxviii. 11 f. illustrates this statement and represents all these features. There are difficulties of translation and different views as to the interpretation of particular phrases. But it is clear that in accusing the King of Tyre of arrogance and self-exaltation he goes back to the figure of Paradise or "The garden of God," and either knows traditions concerning Eden fuller than

those given in Genesis ii. or idealizes and expands the ancient narrative freely in his own fashion. Behind his references to "the anointed cherub," "the holy mount of God" and "the fiery stones" there are probably mythological allusions whose original connexion and meaning cannot now be restored.

History and Story

In the Old Testament we have what appears to be, and what was once, regarded as a history from the time of the creation of the world down to the days of Nehemiah, covering almost four thousand years. Now we cannot claim to begin the national history earlier than the time of Moses, about 900 years before the time of Nehemiah. The first section, Genesis i.–xi., deals with God and the world, and for this purpose traditions mostly of non-Israelite origin have been adopted and, as far as was possible without destroying them, "cleansed," that is, freed from "pagan" elements. The great space from the Deluge to the Exodus is occupied, one can scarcely say "filled," by stories relating to Abraham, "the father of the faithful," and his immediate descendants. If we use the word "history" for a narration of public events and national movements based upon written sources and preserved with some measure of system, it is clear that there is no history of pre-Mosaic times. It was probably many generations after the Hebrews came into Palestine that simple annals of important public events began to be kept, perhaps not until the establishment of the Kingdom, though reliable tradition concerning the preceding period might be preserved. Indeed we have to admit that the Hebrews were not great historians even of their own kingdoms. True, we can begin history eleven

hundred years B.C., but what we gain is a mere outline. The supreme interest of the men whose writings have come down to us, and of those who preserved them, was not in history as such, though they could not dispense with facts and dates, but in the religious life of the nation and in the men whom they regarded as the founders of their religion and the teachers of their faith. If we use the word " story " or " saga " of popular narratives, poetic in spirit if not in form, that have preserved the best traditions of the race, and embodied its noblest ideals, then we may say that Israel was poor in history but rich in story. The great epochs of the world's life, as the world appeared to the Hebrews, are represented by groups of stories; the creation of the world and the beginnings of the life of humanity, the origin of the Hebrew race, the birth of the nation, the establishment of the Kingdom, the rupture between North and South, the conflict with Baal and the conquest of a larger faith. It is not meant that this definition and division can be carried through in a sharp complete manner. The *history* of Absalom's rebellion is also a splendid *story*, " the richest jewel in the antique historical writing in Israel " (Gunkel). The striking story, 2 Samuel xxi., may be an accurate picture of a real event, and it is certainly a dramatic story.[1]

These stories have been subjected to a searching examination and minute criticism; the immense amount of careful work that scholars have devoted to

[1] " Unfortunately Israel's popular historical writings have come to us only in ruins. The most of the pieces are marred by additions and insertions. The history of Absalom's rebellion is specially suited to teach us the original style of this literature because it happens to have been left almost entirely free from these displacements."—H. Schmidt.

them has shown their value, as a revelation of the life and thought of a people to whom Providence has assigned a greater task and a nobler destiny than was even dreamed of by their boldest prophets. Stories apparently simple are seen to have a wonderful richness of thought and depth of feeling. Tribes that in the earliest days *seemed* to be similar to the Hebrews have passed away and left no trace, but, by the grace of God, this small people has given a great heritage to the world, even in these simple tales.

Oral Tradition the Earliest Form

The earliest stories were handed down for a considerable period by oral tradition; they were spoken or recited to interested hearers where men gathered for social intercourse, for entertainment and instruction. The most primitive stories are very short; it is surprising how many questions are raised, and how much thought is compressed into a few well-rounded sentences. In those days, before men had learned to rely so much on books, memory was tenacious, and frequent repetition ensured their preservation. But changes would take place by the unconscious action of changing life and in some cases irreparable loss has been suffered before or after they assumed the written form. We, to whom the multiplicity of books has become a danger, may do well to remember that before books played such an important part, men possessed poetic inspiration, a wholesome curiosity concerning life and its mysteries, literary gifts and dramatic powers. We claim with regard to these short stories that a service may be rendered, pleasure and profit derived by giving them again an independent life and seeking to find their original meaning.

The meaning that they had arose out of the deepest life of the best representatives of the people, the need of expressing in the noblest, most effective form, the thoughts of men to whom life even with common tasks is something of a burden and a mystery, the desire of communion with their fellows as well as of peace with their God. All people have the longing for entertainment as well as instruction, and instruction must have living interest and perhaps some touch of what we call amusement. Because of the original severity of their life, and the fact that it was their destiny to fight against a sensuous worship and an attractive idolatry, they tended to be somewhat starved on the artistic side of life.[1] Statuary, painting and the drama were not to be in the line of their development as they were to be specialists in a different sphere. All intense specialism has to be paid for whether in the case of the nation or the individual. But these rich elements of life cannot be completely suppressed. The story-teller was a prominent feature in the life of Oriental peoples, and he was the kind of artist that could survive among the Hebrews, and adapt himself to the growing life and expanding thought.

The Gift of Nameless Poets

The stories come to us from men whose names we do not know; like popular proverbs, they may be traced to "the wisdom of many and the wit of one." Ancient literature has generally this anonymous quality. Per-

[1] "Religion found its expression in art; art was the ally of idolatry, and the later uncompromising attitude of Judaism towards display of artistic meaning implies that the concrete symbolism, etc., reflected intelligible religious conceptions."—Stanley A. Cook.

sonal fame and monetary reward were not important factors. The travelling story-teller, like the mediæval minstrel, no doubt received a kindly welcome and substantial hospitality. Though no talk of " genius " or conscious discussion of " art " has come down to us, it is true that the Hebrews had a genius not only for story-telling, but also for pouring their richest life into such stories. Life appeals to life whatever form it may take, hence their abiding attraction and power. Careful students have discovered " art," " psychology " and " pedagogy " ; these subtle things for which we use repellent technical words are all the more powerful when they appear in forms so simple and unconscious. The short story does not ask its questions direct, propound its problems or state its lessons in a formal manner, but gives a picture of life in which these are suggested or involved. As we shall see later, it is much easier to state the contents and meaning of the scientific statement in Genesis i. than it is to interpret the poetic stories in Genesis ii. and iii. The first chapter of Genesis is a " cosmogony " rather than a " story " ; an exposition of it will be attempted rather as a contrast than because it belongs in the strict sense to the proper subject of this book. The stories are in prose form except where now and then solemnity or excitement demands the rhythmic form (Genesis ii. 23, iii. 14, 17b–19, iv. 23, ix. 25–27). It is claimed that sometimes a story in song has been turned into prose or that its metre has been disfigured by the later reviser, e.g. Genesis xi. :

3. Come, we will make brick,
And bake them till they are hard.

4. Come, let us build a city,
And a tower with its head in heaven,

And let us make a landmark
That we be not scattered over the earth.

7. Come, let us go down,
And confound their speech.[1]

Conjectures of this kind are interesting and are easily made as the distance in form and spirit between poetry and prose is not so great in Hebrew as in modern English. But as a rule the stories are in prose; it is the spirit that is poetic, the avoidance of specific definition and direct polemic, the lifting of the subject into a soft atmosphere, the use of symbols that suggest perhaps even more than was in the mind of the original speaker, but they possess this richness and spiritual value because he has opened a vein in which there is great treasure for future thinkers and poets. This and more is what is meant by their essentially "poetic character."

But logic is not lost, the story has a real order and a living movement; it begins quietly, moves slowly and when the climax approaches, goes swiftly to its close. In Genesis ii. there is the sober statement of a time when the earth was barren because of the lack of showers from heaven, the planting of a garden to be man's abode. (It is not likely that the ancient geography, ii. 10–14, formed an original part of this simple story; as we read it we are drawn into a different sphere.) The creation of man, the making of the lower creatures and the attempt to find a companion for the man are set forth in simple picturesque phrases. The special, peculiar and mysterious creation of woman; the joyful recognition by the man of the fact that here, at last, is a companion suitable for him; these form the climax

[1] Duhm, *Encyc. Bib. III*, 3796.

of the story. The rhythmic form is suggestive of excitement and exaltation. This at last is—

> " Bone of my bone
> And flesh of my flesh.
> She shall be called woman
> Because she was taken out of man."

We meet here the feature quite common in ancient stories, the play upon similarity of sounds, the emphasis laid on the meaning of words : *adama* the ground, *adam* (homo) *man* who was taken out of the ground ; *ish* (vir), *man*, *ishshah*, woman, taken out of man. The etymologies are now seen to be of the popular kind, having in most cases no real linguistic basis. But they gave pleasure at a time when men knew little about the origin and nature of language and when names were not regarded as mere labels but as real things having deep significance. The name and the nature were for the ancients closely linked together, one carried with it the secret of the other (Gen. xxxii. 29). It is absurd to call an artifice that moved in such an atmosphere and was bathed in such a spirit " a pun." Great writers of a later age have used it sparingly ; a great prophet could employ it with tremendous force and would not be likely to regard it as mere cleverness of wit or smartness of style (Isa. v. 7).[1]

[1] In our times, the play upon words has been treated as a mere verbal sport to show the cleverness of the writer, and create fun for the reader ; but even in modern days traces of the ancient spirit may be discovered. " A little more than kin, and less than kind," *Hamlet*, i. 2. " Old Gaunt, indeed, and gaunt in being old." " Gaunt am I for the grave, gaunt as a grave," *Richard II*, ii. 1. Lord Chesterfield, Letter cl., speaks of Fra Paolo, who had been " stilettoed " on account of his opposition to the court of

In the second section of the Paradise Story there is the same artistic skill; the tempter's plausible appeal, the woman's natural curiosity, the man's weak compliance, the reaction that comes swiftly after yielding to temptation, when the glamour of unlawful enjoyment has passed, leaving only nakedness and shame. The responsibility is shifted by the cowardly man to the weak woman, and thence to the original tempter. The stern oracles of judgment and punishment in the reverse order; an adventure begun in bright alluring colours ending in dark despair. A tragedy compressed into a few powerful phrases, a prose poem and a parable. There are mythical features, but this is not a myth, it is not an artificial allegory but a real story, true in the deepest sense, in which real human experience has found pathetic expression and in which men of later ages and other lands may find a reflection of their own thoughts in the face of life's burden and mystery.

Rome, saying in reference to an anonymous book, "Conosco bene lo stile Romano" (I know well the Roman *style*.) (A colleague who read this note pointed out that the play on *stylus* goes back to Cicero in a reference to the death of Cæsar.) When the poet Fabre, who was near his end, lamented that some one had stolen his verses (vers), Danton told him to be quiet as in a week he would make plenty of worms (vers). "Tais toi! Dans une semaine tu feras assez de vers" (H. Belloc's Danton, 333).

The delicacy and good taste of the modern writer who refers to the classic passage, "On this rock I will build my Church," as Christ's pun (Bernard Shaw) does not call for any comment. The passage quoted, Isa. v. 7, is one of the finest examples of assonance in the Hebrew language, the two pairs of words, "Judgment" and "oppression"; "righteousness" and "a cry" (of the oppressed) are similar in sound though so far apart in meaning. Duhm's rendering, "gut Regiment, Blutregiment; "Rechtsprechung," "Rechtsbrechung," is a close imitation.

The Cycle of Stories

The time came, when short detached stories could not satisfy the needs of a people who in their own way entered upon a literary stage and desired a fuller knowledge of the past. The Priestly writers are not greatly interested in history as such, but merely as a scheme preliminary to the great work of Moses; in their day the best historical writing was in the past; the chronicler, who shows fully the spirit of this priestly school, used the old sources and often transformed them into "Church History." History loses then its real perspective, but preserves in a formal manner the idea of different stages in God's dealing with the world. The account of creation has for its climax the sanctification of the Sabbath day. At the beginning man's food consisted of the fruits of the earth; after the Flood the flesh of animals might be used for nourishment, when freed from the blood. Abraham is initiated into the sacred rite of circumcision, but for Moses is reserved the full revelation of the sacrificial system and the Jewish institutions which are to last for ever. The different names for God—Elohim, El-Shaddai (to Abraham) and Yahweh (to Moses)—are meant to indicate a measure of progress in the revelation.

Such divisions are found in the history of other nations symbolized by mythological beasts, or the metals, gold, silver, copper and iron; and the chronology is in the larger nations on a more extensive scale. As such conceptions are found among Jews, Persians and Greeks it is natural to look for their roots in the ancient Oriental nations, most likely in Babylonia, because there we find the most definite astronomical knowledge, and the view of the world history as a world-year with

its four seasons. The revival and new application of such ideas in later apocalyptic literature and its influence on Christian Theology cannot be considered here. But in the section of the Priestly Code found in Genesis this scheme is no longer either myth or legend, the life-blood has been squeezed out of it, the poetry has gone and a mere skeleton is left.

In the other documents the earlier freedom and flexibility is preserved ; the long story is produced by placing different short stories side by side. In those days the writers were not ecclesiastics with a chief interest in the ritual of the temple, they could still enjoy the primitive stories that were akin to their own spiritual experience, they were not yet tormented by fine shades of abstract theology—and had great delight in personal adventures. It was the story of human life and not " the Law " that touched their imagination and kindled their loyalty.

Biography, as we understand it, was not attainable ; but stories of the heroes who lived in dim prehistoric times, and scenes from the lives of real historic characters, could be linked together to form a longer story which might have a little suggestion of continuity and dramatic movement. When these have been read from childhood, with delight in the incidents so charmingly told and neglect of chronology and incongruities, such stories, e.g. those gathered round the name of Abraham or Joseph, are fused into a living whole. Analysis of such sacred literature may then seem to be an impertinence, in fact some would call it sacrilege. When they are examined carefully the material is seen to be scanty and the connexion very loose even for the biography of a single person, not to speak of the history of a nation. The situation is further complicated by the fact that stories

from different sources have been blended and in some cases inextricably mixed. Far removed as this is from our modern literary processes, for the historian it has advantages, just as to the student of architecture an ancient cathedral that bears the marks of several periods is more interesting than if it had been levelled to the ground and the materials formed into a structure of recent date.

" Thus Genesis consists of streams that have flowed together from many sources. In this final form it has remained until now ; in this form the old stories have exercised an immeasurable influence on later generations. We may perhaps regret that the last great poetic genius, who might have shaped a great poetic whole, a real ' Israelite National Epic,' did not arise. Israel has brought forth great religious reformers, who from the scattered traditions of their people, in the religious spirit, have created a comprehensive unity. But she did not bring forth a Homer. For our investigation that is at all events fortunate ; for just because a great poetic whole did not come out of it, and the pieces stand side by side with their essential features not thoroughly melted away, we are in a position to trace the history of the whole process." (Gunkel). It is recognized by the most reverent and careful students that, while the original elements have not been fused together by passing through the mind of a great personality, a Dante or Shakespeare, they have been quite skilfully handled in the attempt to give the impression of a biography when sufficiency of material was not available, and while we cannot exactly " see the grass grow " the claim that the process can be discovered in outline seems to be justified. (Note specially the analysis of the *Flood Story*.) The existence of separate

stories concerning the ancestors of the Hebrews and related tribes, the combination of these into a series, showing the superiority of the Hebrew hero—note the contrast between Abraham and Lot—these simple literary processes kept alive the spirit of patriotism and religion. Into such a series later additions could be inserted, either for their own sake or to compensate for the removal of something considered objectionable.

The chapter in Genesis already referred to (xviii.) is a good illustration of this process. In the first part an ancient story has been used to glorify Abraham's spontaneous generosity and courteous hospitality; it has then been connected with the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom; Abraham appears as a prophet to whom the God of Israel reveals the coming catastrophe (Amos iii. 7), this rests here not upon God's sovereign pleasure but upon the fact that the patriarch will be loyal to the commandments and teach his children to revere the divine law. This forms the framework for a dialogue between Yahweh and Abraham provoked by the fact that when punishment comes upon the guilty city the innocent also will suffer. This question played a great part in the thought and literature of later times and it is still with us. In primitive times this fact was accepted apparently with stoical calmness, what we call the solidarity of the family and tribe was regarded as a ruling idea in the order of Providence and in the administration of justice (Josh. vii. 24, 2 Sam. xxi.). The question still rings in our ears, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" When men first learned to ask that question it showed a new sensitiveness, a beginning of the thought of the separateness and the sacredness of the individual life, a suggestion that even God cannot be absolutely arbitrary but must con-

form to a standard that commends itself to the conscience of mankind. But the question in its theological and moral aspects does not belong to the prehistoric period of Israel's history. Our purpose now, however, is merely to point out how various strands have been woven together with considerable skill, but still leaving some indications of the fact that their separate elements belong to different periods of the history and different stages of religious thought.

Fact and Fiction

Some would say "Fact *or* Fiction," but that is, in this case, an unnecessary antithesis, an irritating contrast, as if the two ideas were mutually exclusive or self-destructive. In history the actual fact is often difficult to reach and it seldom attains its full power unless it gains poetic form. One may find a fact as recent as the Fall of the Bastille represented very differently according as the historian is seeking to give to events a precise "scientific" treatment and reproduce the correct scale; or as regardless of mere scale, he allows his imagination to discern a symbol destined to loom more largely as time passes and gather to itself related events and ideas. The particular kind of history that certain specialists now seek, where the various influences, racial, religious and specially the economic, are clearly separated and evenly balanced—such "history" was not possible in early days, and even in our own times the more mechanical it becomes the less of living truth it can impart. One mission of the Bible, quite subordinate we admit, but important in its own place, may be to deliver us from the hard pragmatic mood that worships "facts" and arranges things on a dead level with the result that the life goes out of them and

the real meaning is lost. In many spheres we need to remember that the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life. Why should we not take with gladness what has been given instead of wishing that primitive peoples had conformed to our small rigid standards? Facts have come down to us, they have come clothed in the form of living persons and bearing ideas that exert a powerful influence. Certain great beliefs of the Israelites, as soon as they had attained a measure of clearness, worked themselves backwards into the literature as well as forwards and in the manner of all living beliefs blended themselves with the earliest recollections and expressed themselves in the popular stories which had to serve the purpose of national history. These beliefs attained a richer power and justified themselves in their results and have had a powerful influence on the world of religious thought. (1) God had chosen Israel from the beginning to gain a position of prosperity and privilege and (2) this gave them a superiority over the tribes to which they were closely related, but from which they were to be separated in spirit and destiny. (3) This involved even in early days a strong emphasis on certain moral ideas which were at work before the great prophets gave them a clear and noble expression.

Ideas and ideals are the living realities, the form in which they are expressed is important, as it also yields information concerning the intellectual and spiritual life of the period and the people. In the patriarchal stories there is the correct tradition that the fathers of the Israelites were wanderers, living the simple pastoral life. This appears in the ancient form, not peculiar to the Hebrews, that the nation had one father named Abraham. In the same way Arabs descend from Ishmael, Edomites from Esau, Moabites and Ammon-

ites from Lot, etc. We know that such a form is poetic rather than scientific, it seeks to represent in personal form the dominant feature of the nation's faith. It may be used by friend or foe and the ideal lives long after the history has faded. In this way Hebrew story-tellers have glorified their own ancestors, attributing to them gifts and graces that were only fully realized at a later time. In their treatment of Canaan, Moab and Ammon they not only claim superior privilege for themselves, but also condemn luxury and licentiousness which was alien to the simplicity and severity of their own religion.

The story in Genesis xxxiv illustrates, when carefully examined, the processes and ideas already mentioned, and also the difficulty of disentangling the exact features and meaning of the original picture. It is a grim story and reflects the bold fighting spirit of the early days and especially the spirit attributed to the clans of Simeon and Levi (Gen. xlix. 5–7). The patriarchs elsewhere are pictured as peaceful wanderers; the story of Abraham's campaign, Genesis xiv., presents an exceptional view and has peculiar problems of its own. Here we read of lust, cunning and cruelty; in its form the story is intensely personal but in all probability it relates to tribal commerce and conflicts in the earliest times of the settlement in Canaan. Whether we have come to the bottom of it in explaining it as an attack on the Danite tribe by the Shechemites and terrible revenge by the clans of Simeon and Levi is uncertain. The problem is more complex than it seems at first sight. Certain things, however, we do know, viz. (1) That Simeon and Levi, as powerful, warlike tribes, disappear from actual history, they seem to have been used up by warlike exploits of this kind. The reappearance of

Levi as a sacred tribe is another story with difficult problems. (2) That in the earliest times life was fierce, marked by local quarrels and tribal feuds, and yet in one way it was not so intolerant, that is, there was not such a deep gulf of the theological and religious kind between the various tribes. Such an act as that of Shechem in the case of an individual would not have been judged so rigorously in primitive times when full reparation was offered (Exod. xxii. 16, 17). In 2 Samuel xiii. 16, Amnon's greatest guilt was in casting off in such a cruel shameful fashion the woman he had outraged. As for the cunning treachery, the weapon of the weak against the strong, by which vengeance is sought against the wrongdoer, the Hebrews have always been prone to judge that too lightly. Jacob here seems to speak only of the danger of rousing a feeling in the land that will bring revenge, and he does not lay stress on the sacredness of such a treaty and the divine punishment that might be expected (cf. 2 Sam. xxi. 2). The older form of the story closes in a sharp energetic style, the prudent question of the father, "Shall I and my whole house risk destruction?" is quickly met by the question of the younger men, "Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?" which means "in such an attack upon our family honour we are prepared to take all risks." A reply more in harmony with a spirit of "chivalry" than the light treatment of women recorded elsewhere (xii. 19, xix. 8). Here is a healthy indignation against wrong which in its present personal form would exert a wholesome moral influence, whatever the precise origin of the narrative may have been.

"And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in

lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done." Thus we see that an ancient story, if not suitable for public exposition, may be interesting for the dim historical reminiscences which shine through, the varying shades of the moral ideal, and the strong personal dramatic form in which these narratives come to us.

A Babylonian Parallel

Sargon, the powerful king of Agada, am I.
My mother was of low degree, my father I did not know.
The brother of my father dwelt in the mountain,
My city was Azupirani, situate on the bank of the Euphrates
(My) humble mother conceived me; in secret she brought me forth.
She placed me in a basket boat of rushes; with pitch she closed my door,
She gave me over to the river which did not (rise) over me,
The river bore me along; to Akki, the irrigator, it carried me,
Akki, the irrigator in the . . . brought me to land.
Akki the irrigator appointed me his gardener,
While I was gardener, Ishtar looked on me with love
(And) four years I ruled the kingdom.[1]

These are the words of Sargon I, once regarded as a purely mythical figure, but now taking his place in the series of Babylonian kings, though historians differ widely as to the exact time of his reign. When we read the statement it reminds us of the story of the birth and preservation of the child Moses, one or two thousand years later. The resemblance between the two "legends" is a much more striking parallelism than is the case of the Egyptian tale of "The Two Brothers" and the Story of Joseph. It reminds us that many such poetic stories must have been current

[1] Quoted by Goodspeed, p. 62. Cf. Peters' *Bible and Spade*, p. 14.

in Israel linked with names of historical characters and traditional figures, which have left no trace on the sacred page, or have become so completely absorbed that it is impossible to disentangle them into their original elements, though their presence in the background may be suspected.

The modern biographer with more or less material at his command is curious about the childhood of his hero, trying to trace the qualities that come from father or mother, or that have to be attributed to still more distant ancestors. The ancients, though they did not express it clearly, had a dim idea that "the child is the father of the man," and that God prepares his chief instruments with care, choosing the parents and training the child. If for want of definite information they were compelled to use poetic stories, and even stories that had been used for the same purpose before, is there in that any real need for surprise or perplexity? Is not the belief in the divine Providence that provides the man for the hour the main thing? "When the tale of bricks is doubled then comes Moses." Perhaps the convention, if such it was, was not always used with the intelligence and appropriateness that is shown in the case of Moses (cf. Judges xiii. 8 ff.).

Much learning and skill have been spent upon the task of relating the Old Testament stories to the general background of Oriental life and literature. The attempt to resolve many of them into "astral myths" has failed. But it is quite possible that stories such as those of Joseph and Samson may have in their outward decorations reminiscences of the glories of ancient gods and heroes. The thought of the sun as a god rising in radiant light and reaching noonday

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splendour, passing at night into the underworld and fighting with the powers of darkness in order to be able to raise again; this picture might be transferred to the life of a legendary hero or historical character, and later lose its original sense. Early artists, poets and story-tellers might have their conventions which could be applied with some measure of flexibility to the various branches of their art. The life, for instance, of David might be so arranged as to correspond to a scheme consisting of various steps, success, depression, renewed success, the scheme again repeating itself with deeper shadows and more glorious splendour. It may be said that to pursue these subtle suggestions is to consider too curiously and to lose ourselves in vain speculation. At least it will give us a fuller realization of the complexity of the subject. That which a man has pieced together, guided by a discernible motive and plan, can be disentangled with comparative ease; that which has by a long continuous process been woven into a living tissue cannot be completely separated into its original elements; the attempts to do this may seem to be an attempt to destroy it, but "the flowers in the garden of literature" still remain reflecting the life of man and showing forth the glory of God.

It is not possible to give in a short space a full review of these ancient stories, but specimens may be selected that will show what an important part they played in the life of the Hebrew people, how they stimulated and preserved the great beliefs which gave real individuality and special character to their religion. We must, however, approach them in a kindly spirit, with sympathy for the difficulties of the exposition, with delicate appreciation of the struggling growing

life, and with admiration for the poetic form of expression that values truth more highly than mere fact.[1] One writer, speaking of the ancient Oriental symbolism, warns against the materialism which issues from positive science, "which simplifies all by suppressing all" (Pierre Loti). It is not the aim of real science to simplify and suppress by reducing the rich complexity of life to rigid formulas, but rather to interpret the promise and prophecy of the earlier stages of life in the light of the later unfoldings of the divine purpose, realizing more fully the great truth that "God fulfils himself in many ways."

[1] On "the Oriental tendency to convey truth in the form of tales," *see* Dr. Moffatt's *The Approach to the New Testament*, pp. 132 and 186.

I. THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

Gen. i.–ii. 4. A Priestly Narrative about 550 B.C.

This chapter is not "a story" in the ordinary usage of that word, it is not "a myth," nor is it in the strict sense a poem. Students now believe that it belongs to the latest part of the Pentateuch. In course of time it found its way to the beginning of a complete Bible; it has in that position formed a splendid prologue to the whole history of the revelation, through which the belief in one God has been given to the world. A book arranged chronologically, showing the order in time of its various parts, and thus indicating the onward movement of thought, would be interesting and attractive to serious students; but such a book would be difficult to prepare, and our Bible is certainly not that kind of book. We must concede that it is not possible to imagine a nobler or more appropriate introduction to the sacred book than this sober, dignified statement that the world came into being through the word of the living God. In early times there were differences of interpretation, and in the past century there were fierce controversies as to its meaning and value; but for many centuries it served the Church and the Christian world as sober science and noble theology. If we will use a label, we have to say that the chapter is a "cosmogony," that is an account of the origin of the world, and that it is not "a theo-

gony," a story of the birth and struggles of the gods. But a mere name does not carry us very far, especially in a case that is too complex to be comprehended in any single name. Mythologies and speculations concerning the origin of the gods and the creation of the world, which have lain hidden for centuries, have recently been revealed in great abundance; they testify to the activity of the human mind and the fascination of these great themes, in the remote past. We must confine our attention to this Hebrew document, with only a necessary side-glance at that vast field of research.

Critical Problems. It is not advisable to revive and review these old controversies, or to attempt a detailed examination of questions that are fully considered in learned commentaries; we must state briefly the results that have been reached, after generations of serious work, by the most careful students. We accept the view that the chapter comes from the Priestly Writers whose chief concern was with the ritual of the Jewish Church; but who felt the need of placing the life of their own nation in the general framework of the history of the world.[1] Precise, formal statement, rather than diffuse rhetoric or poetic adornment, was the characteristic of that school. This section is all of one piece, the signs of addition or revision are too slight to call for detailed treatment in this discussion. Nor need we linger over the suggestions that the first verse might be translated "In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth," or that the final phrase "these are the generations of the heavens and the earth" has suffered a transposition, and once stood at the beginning of the narrative (cf. v. 1; vi. 9, etc.). On the

[1] *See* p. 27.

whole, the chapter is clear and intelligible, giving an orderly statement of the creation of an ordered world, out of chaos, making it a scene of beauty and fruitfulness. The grass springs forth, the trees begin to grow, animal life in all its rich variety appears, and last comes man as crown of creation, all this by the power of the divine command and all pronounced good in the sight of God. We speak of the divine creative word and that certainly is the dominant motive from the third verse to the end. Is there a slight reminiscence of another view in the mention of the brooding spirit at the beginning? There is no direct mention here of the result of the spirit's action; in some ancient cosmogonies creation was conceived as what we may call an "*evolution*" from within the world-egg, if we use that word to denote a very simple idea. Here we have the mystic creative word, which, if it does not create something out of nothing, turns darkness and confusion into order and light.

If we accept the view that, in its present form, this account of creation comes from a period comparatively late, that is, centuries after the time of Moses, we soon recognize that this applies only to its final form and not to its substance and spirit. It probably existed earlier in Israel, in a somewhat different form; the eight works may have had their own order before they were compressed into the scheme of six days. The emphasis on the Sabbath and its sanctification, as the climax of creation, may have been missing in a more ancient type. These are questions that must arise for the careful student, but that can never be answered in any final dogmatic fashion. The impression, however, is left that a picture may be new and yet in one sense very old; it may have gathered into

itself, transformed and refined, features whose origin must be traced to a remote past. A great man under the influence of a living inspiration might compose such a picture, passing all the elements he had absorbed through his own personality, and blending them so perfectly as to defy the keenest analysis. Here the process is not carried out so completely, the long history lying behind this story has left its mark if only in dim outline. It is generally accepted that there are traces of stages through which it has passed after coming into the life of Israel, and that the influence of Babylonian conceptions are discernible in the background. The conflict of the god of light with the great primeval monster, and the creation by a process of *division*, separating the waters into two distinct and ordered spheres, reminds us of the earliest mythology, although there all is so luxuriant, poetic and grotesque in its polytheism, while here all is so simple and sober, in its presentation of the work of the One true God. To-day scholars are going still farther behind the Babylonian cosmogony, showing that, ancient as it is, it descended from still earlier types and passed through many stages. So when we say this thing belongs to a certain date, the remark even if approximately true may be superficial. The new thing may have in it the life of unnumbered ages. The power of the true religion is seen in the way it can claim great things from every sphere, cleanse them and lay them upon the altar of the living God. That power which distinguishes real Christian faith from the stagnant religions was already at work in the religion of Israel and showed itself in many ways.

Science and Theology. We recognize clearly that it is futile to attempt to reconcile the first chapter of

Genesis, in its varied details, with the latest results of modern science. It was quite possible for the Hebrews to believe that the world was created in six days at a comparatively recent period. The Hebrew world does not correspond to the immense universe that science unfolds to our wondering gaze. We know that great civilizations existed long before the date that Jewish chronology assigned to the creation of the world. We know, also, that learned men in the more ancient nations had given careful and systematic observation to the varied forms and forces of the natural world, and that they had a larger, even if inadequate, conception of the long history of the world. Egypt with its wonderful river Nile, and Babylon with its vast plains, its great rivers and streams, were more fitted than Palestine to create the feelings of astonishment and terror which gave power and splendour to the worship of nature. The watery chaos, with its weltering confusion, is more at home in the great Babylonian plains than among the hills and dales of Palestine. The great sea monsters (verse 21), terrible in strength and reminiscent of demonic powers, are a non-Israelite feature, though here they are merely creatures of the one God, mentioned incidentally, in the course of the great programme.

We venture, as a sheer matter of fact, and without any strain of apologetic interest, to claim three things for this simple statement. Its brevity also is a great virtue in that it has left out so much that might have been brought in, and this has more than a mere negative value. (1) Note the strange providence that while the great mass of ancient Oriental speculation, of which there was such rich profusion in the two

great Oriental Empires, has been buried and lost for centuries, this small nation, their pupil in some respects, was destined to give to the world a clear noble presentation of God's creative power, and of an order of creation which in its general outline satisfied the intelligence of reverent souls. It is admitted that the great nations did not succeed in placing monotheism on a secure basis, and while we concede that Israel did not deliver monotheism completely from nationalism, she laid the foundations broad and deep for an intelligent belief in one God. The point, however, with which we are immediately concerned is the purifying process through which the ancient traditions passed, when they entered into the life of Israel and came forth fitted for the world's use, in this calm strong statement, stately in its dignity and powerful in its impressiveness. (2) Surely this in the long run has served the cause of science. Science in a very real sense was possible under a polytheistic system, a science of observation: men could measure the movements of the stars, watch the time of floods, and apply the result to their own service. But it may be questioned whether science, in the larger sense, could go far hampered by the view that the sun, moon and stars are gods. Here the God of Israel creates the sun, which in these days was the supreme god of Babylon. The moon, another god, is a lesser light, a smaller creature. Incidentally, suggestive of the great sweep and summary character of the story, it is said "He made the stars also." The man of science may remind us that as such he is not concerned directly with God but with the relation of natural objects and forces, yet in all his thinking he takes for granted the unity of the world, a thought which

it took countless ages for men to conquer, and which finds a splendid if simple presentation in this chapter. (3) This brings us to the fact that the thought of one God and the unity of the world is the foundation of all theology. There have been many systems that have had their day and, in their complete form, ceased to be, but this belief is the basis of all systems that have faced the world's problems with any strength and reality. Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism all rest upon it, and in their own spheres they have a mighty grip upon the thought of the world. Towards this truth Israel's religion grows and converges and so it is rightly regarded as preparatory and prophetic. It may be presented in rigid mechanical forms, and we cannot claim much of the poetic and plastic for this particular presentation (cf. Isaiah xl.). The hard outline needs to be softened by the thought of God working within as well as outside of what we call the world.[1] Philosophers and poets have made their contributions, for which we are grateful, but we still retain our appreciation of the men who by God's grace gave us this sublime picture of creation.

The Permanent Faith

There is in this cosmogony a certain solemn sublimity, which tends to increase as our minds bring to it the richer associations of our larger world, but there is not much of that living poetry, that quick throb of passion, which is the natural atmosphere of religion. When the moon and stars lose their divinity and become simply lamps to regulate the Hebrew festivals, there may be an approach to sober science but the

[1] For a living poetic presentation of creation, probably based on Gen. i., *see* Ps. civ.

poetry has vanished. The memory of the golden age lingers here only in faint formal fashion (verses 29, 30). "The motives of this belief (that men and animals lived together in peace) lie deep in the human heart—horror of bloodshed, sympathy with the lower animals, the longing for harmony in the world, and the conviction that on the whole the course of things has been from good to worse—all have contributed their share, and no scientific teaching can rob the idea of its poetic and ethical value" (Skinner).

But after all, religion is not mere feeling, it has an intellectual element, and it has always been felt that the recognition of God's presence in the order of the world is one of its strong supports. Here is admiration of the grandeur and glory of nature, here is behind the formal statement some feeling for the mystery of life, here is a calm optimism which conceives of God as looking upon His creation and calling it "good." That this world does not arise of itself, that it reveals the power and manifests the will of one living God, that it is not the play of blind forces or controlled by a variety of gods and devils, but is an ordered world, divine in its origin and beneficent in its working—this belief, due to the co-operation of the divine spirit and the human mind through long centuries, is the intellectual background of an intelligent faith.

The light is good because it vanquishes the darkness, makes the day cheerful and enables man to go forth to his work until the evening; the green grass, the fertile fields and luxuriant forests, the seas with their swarms of living creatures, the blue sky and the birds flying in the front of the firmament; all these are good because they are gifts of the great God for the sustenance and blessing of mankind. Over all this

wonderful realm God who rules in the heavens has given to man a position of lordship, a faint semblance of His own Kingship. The fixed solid firmament may vanish into endless space; we may lose ourselves in complicated discussion concerning the origin and relations of species; in superficial moments we may rejoice in our own cleverness and smile at the "childish" beliefs of earlier ages; but after all our criticisms this masterly summary of creation, this splendid confession of God's power and wisdom, with all its limitations, will continue to repeat its great message from the past. It should lead us to think of the struggle, aspiration and partial success, rather than of the failure of men who prepared the way for us. "God having foreseen some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Hebrews xi. 40).

Monotheism and Science

On this point, the following quotation from Tyndall's Presidential Address, Belfast, 1874, is both interesting and instructive. "Referring to the condition of the heathen, who sees a god behind every natural event, thus peopling the world with thousands of beings whose caprices are incalculable, Lange shows the impossibility of any compromise between such notions and those of science, which proceeds on the assumption of never-changing law and causality." "But," he continues, "when the great thought of one God, acting as a unit upon the universe, has been seized, the connexion of things in accordance with the law of cause and effect is not only thinkable, but is a necessary consequence of the assumption. For when I see ten thousand wheels in motion, and know, or believe, that they are all driven by one motive power, then I know that I have before me a mechanism, the action of every part of which is determined by the plan of the whole. So much being assumed it follows that I may investigate the structure of that machine and the various motions of its parts.

In other words, were a capricious god at the circumference of every wheel and at the end of every lever, the machine would be incalculable by the methods of science. But the action of all its parts being rigidly determined by their connexions and relations, and these being brought into play by a single motive power, then though this last prime mover may elude me, I am still able to comprehend the machinery which it sets in motion." Speaking of Gen. i., Tyndall said, " It is a poem, not a scientific treatise. In the former aspect it is for ever beautiful : in the latter aspect it has been and will continue to be purely obstructive and hurtful." But, as one of the greatest manifestoes of monotheism, it did point the way towards the great belief in the unity of the world ; when that work has been done it still lives by virtue of the faith that inspired it, and through which it makes its permanent appeal. The man of science may regard the belief in *one* God behind all the varied phenomena of the world as an *assumption*, but to the historian it presents itself as an *achievement* of humanity, under the guidance of God, involving painful struggles through many centuries.

II. THE CREATION OF MAN AND HIS COMPANIONS

Gen. ii. 4b–25. The Yahwist, 850 b.c.

(While dates are given to suggest the relative historical position of the different narratives, it is important to remember that they are merely approximate statements and cannot lay claim to precise accuracy.)

This wonderful story, which tells of the making of man, the origin of the animals, and the union of man and woman, apart from the archæological note 10–17, is compressed into 15 verses. It shows how some important questions were answered in those early days; it raises questions that will never be completely answered, and with all its simplicity it has a largeness of suggestion that seeks to escape from the small world in which it was born. It brings before us "the man and woman," the first of their species, "our first parents." They are nameless. "Adam" does not become a proper name until chapter v.; "Eve" comes in at the end of the third chapter and is probably an addition to this story. In the body of this story she receives a name, "woman," which speaks of her origin, and binds her life to that of her companion for whom she was created. We are told how "the man and the woman" came to appear on the earth, and what was their position and occupation in

those days, when the world was young and human beings were living in childlike innocence.

There is a large consensus of opinion that the passage verses 10–14 does not belong to the original form of the story, but is rather a piece of ancient scholarship, one of the earliest attempts to define precisely in terms of geography the site of " the garden of Eden." Such attempts have continued down to our own time; sometimes merely seeking to answer the question, where did ancient Oriental tradition place " the garden of the gods," or sometimes, mingling science with poetry, in an endeavour to find out where was the scene of the first beginnings of human life. Much learning has been given to such discussions, and still there does not seem to be any hope of a complete and final answer to these questions; incidentally, they yield much interesting information. Tradition certainly looked to the East, beyond the desert, to some pleasant oasis in Babylonia or Mesopotamia.

Such inquiries, in a scientific spirit, are alien to the whole tone and style of the story. It is now clear that in passing from the great world of " the cosmogony " (ch. i.), we come here into a smaller, simpler world, with a quite different atmosphere. There are critical problems here, and there have been many differences of interpretation, but the first chapter was naturally the scene of the fiercest battles between " Science and Theology." Apart from these outworn controversies, we have an interest in the striking differences between the two accounts of creation. This story begins by describing the condition of the earth before vegetation and man appeared upon it. The land was there but it was dry and therefore barren ; very different this from the chaotic waters that remind us of the great floods

rushing down the Babylonian plains. A picture rather of the desert, or of some part of Palestine during a severe drought. The " mist " stream, or fountain, that went up and watered the whole face of the ground, before the rain was given, is also one of the unsolved problems. Considering the length of time that these stories were passed along by word of mouth, and the difficulties under which they were preserved, in written form, the wonder is that, on the whole, the picture is so well preserved.

Man is *formed* by God out of the soil (the word " dust " is probably a duplicate), and into his nostrils the Maker breathed a breath of life, so that he became a living creature. Man's kinship with the earth is clearly recognized, but also his possession of the mysterious force called " Life," which, as is evident, comes not from the earth. The man is dependent upon God, not simply for the earthly body, which, when it is lifeless and cold, passes back to the earth from whence it came, but also for the strange subtle power which keeps him alive. Without, as yet, any elaborate theories of body, soul and spirit, with separate functions and different destinies, there is recognition of the mystery of life and its intimate relation to the earth and to God. The man that has been created is the peasant, the man of the soil, who comes from the earth, spends upon it his daily toil to gain his daily bread, and who, weary and worn out, goes back to it again. But the shadow of death and the " curse " of labour do not yet appear, we shall meet them soon enough. Whether the two chapters ever existed separately or not, they are now very closely joined in substance and spirit. We are still in the golden age, and what a simple " paradise " it is, not a gorgeous

palace and splendid park with lovely women and exhilarating wine. It is a peasant's ideal of a garden that will yield its fruits without exhausting labour, fertile yet requiring a certain amount of loving care. He is put into the garden "to keep it and dress it," there is food sufficient on easy terms. Beauty for the eye, and satisfaction for the senses are there, and with this there comes a prohibition, the full significance of which he cannot now understand.

When we come to the forming of "the beasts of the field" we meet the same simplicity; there is no suggestion of the varied orders of species, "after their kinds" (i. 25), and no mention of "the mighty hunter" who roams the forest in search of big game (x. 10). But here a process begins that has gone on ever since, which we can watch in children's speech, or in the elaborate classification and technical language of learned students. As a father observes with loving interest the unfolding mind of his child coming into contact with a growing world, so God is curious "to see what he would call them," to see how the mind of man would be impressed, and how it would express itself in the face of the new creatures. To each one the man gives a name, of course in the Hebrew tongue, and by the names that he gave them they are now known. Through centuries of "culture" we have travelled far away from that simple scene, but we still feel our kinship with "the lower creation," and if we are tempted to deny it science will demonstrate it to us. Men have explored all regions, they have domesticated useful animals, the wild ones they have slain or tamed, some have been made to minister to our curiosity or amusement, others have learned obedience and have become not only servants, but, in a measure,

companions of men. The relation between man and animals has been close, but the natural friendship was lost.

But if the review of these varied creatures is to find a real companion for man, then it is a failure. We are apt to smile at the thought that there could be here any chance of success, because we forget by what numberless experiments the noblest social arrangements have been built up.[1] No doubt the story-teller knew quite well that not there was fit and full companionship for man to be found, but to him the thought was not so absurd as it appears to us, or he could not have used it for his high purpose. With fine dramatic instinct he makes this part of the picture a background to prepare for his great surprise, his glowing climax.

This is the divine decree that "it is not good for man to be alone"; a companion must be found corresponding to his needs, that his life may be rounded out, and move towards completeness; as a solitary creature he cannot attain full strength and satisfaction. The story-teller living in a simpler age, and with circumstances less complex than ours, knew quite well that it was the destiny of man and woman to render to each other mutual service. Man's desire for the woman, woman's submission to the man, is explained by the manner of her creation. She is not, like man, formed directly from the soil but indirectly from the earth-born man. The man is cast into a deep "hypnotic" sleep, not merely to deliver him from pain, but that the operation may be shrouded in suitable mystery;

[1] In the Babylonian story a woman is used to entice the man from his animal companions; see note at the end of next chapter.

then a part of his body that he will miss the least is taken and "built up" into a woman. Surely it is no more difficult for God to create in this manner than to turn cold clay into a living being, the miracle and mystery is not greater or less. As a symbol of the truth that God has given to the man a companion formed of his own flesh and blood, who ought to serve him and whom he ought to cherish, it is certainly effective; to men in early days both the form and the poetry made their appeal; we shall be all the poorer if we cannot change the form without losing the poetry. There is no attempt, as in the modern style, to describe the beauty and attractiveness of the woman; this is done more impressively in the simple dramatic phrase which sets forth the effect upon the man when he first beheld his real companion. The quick recognition of her as part of himself, the acknowledgment of the gentle force that draws them together, the giving of a name which symbolizes their common nature and destiny; this is expressed in rhythmic form, the natural expression of deep, strong feeling. There is no doctrine of marriage, but here at least is the union of *two* beings whom God has created for fellowship and mutual helpfulness. Whether the form of the statement, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife," is a reminiscence of a particular type of ancient marriage, when a man left his own tribe and entered into that of his wife, need not now be discussed. The writer's mind has for the moment left the original pair in their wonderful garden and remembered that marriage has come to mean the severing of home ties for the formation of new relationships and the founding of new homes. As we look at the picture, our minds may turn to the

complex problems raised by the relations of men and women to each other in varied social conditions, but surely the ideal of one man and one woman dwelling together with mutual respect and affection remains, after the innocence of Eden has been lost, and after all kinds of painful and futile experiments have been tried.

"The man and the woman" were at first simply children in a new world that was bright with the calm sunshine of spring. They do not as yet know the meaning of their relationship, the mystery and the peril of their common life. Modesty and shame they do not know, into their world fierce passion, bitter jealousy or mutual reproach have not come. There are, on the part of the narrator, no bitter complaints that such an idyllic condition cannot last, nor pathetic regrets that the golden days of childhood fade and pass into the dull drab days of common drudgery, heavy labours that deaden the soul and coarse enjoyments that destroy its finer sensibilities. Perhaps these things were in his heart, but he does not wear his heart upon his sleeve. How long did this sweet simplicity last? We cannot tell, this is the realm of story, not of formal biography or precise history; we know that in the next scene we face temptation, failure and shame.

III. "PARADISE LOST"

Gen. iii. The Yahwist, 850 B.C.

The story of "the man and the woman" is continued and we are brought face to face with stern facts of human life; law and transgression, temptation and failure, defeat and death. The simple joy of childlike life suddenly vanishes, oppressive gloom gathers over the scene and steadily increases until the delights of the glorious garden are only a bitter memory; and the stubborn, painful facts of common life are present in tones tinged with a despondency that verges on despair. In this the man and woman are representatives of humanity, poetic figures that do not belong to any definite historical scheme (cf. ch. v). This, along with the fact that it is a duplicate of the name "Woman," and that it appears at the end of the story, makes it probable that the name "Eve" has come from another form of the story, perhaps it was originally the name of a goddess from the olden time.

The view held by scholars seems to have a large measure of probability, viz. that there was more than one form of the ancient tradition, that the simpler, less mythological form of the story has survived and brought with it features from the other, such as "the tree of life," "Eve," and "the cherubim with the flame of the whirling sword." The recension that was displaced and disappeared may have been regarded as more "heathen-

ish " in its tone and features, more alien to the spirit of Hebrew religion. If this is so, apart from these duplications and additions, we can recognize a strong simple statement reflecting the life of the Palestinian peasant ; but the general Semitic background is there also, moulded and transformed by the influence of a sober monotheistic theology. On this view, the story in its present form is Palestinian, though particular features may be traced to Babylonian or other Oriental mythologies ; it is *the story* as a whole, with its living movement, that appeals to us and represents the life of man in relation to God. The words of a careful scholar who was both competent and conservative present the case briefly. " The narrative contains features which have unmistakable counterparts in the religious traditions of other nations ; and some of these, though they have been accommodated to the spirit of Israel's religion, carry indications that they are not native to it." (Dr. Driver's *Genesis*.) Whether we should go farther, and say with Dr. Skinner that the story is non-Israelite, depends upon what we mean by " the story " ; the spirit that breathes in it or the forms that have been used to express it. This critic tells us that, " Through an intensely anthropomorphic medium we discern the features of the God of the prophets and the Old Testament, nay in the analogy of human fatherhood which underlies the description we can trace the lineaments of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. That is the real *Protevangelium* that lies in the passage, the fact that God tempers justice with mercy, the faith that man, though he has forfeited innocence and happiness, is not cast off from fellowship with his creator." If we can go thus far there is lofty spiritual truth in ancient Oriental forms, and in both form and

spirit there is the result of long slow growth, the outcome of man's living faith guided by the Eternal Spirit. Perhaps, however, we need to guard against the temptation to find our own complete Christian theology in these simple stories. We cannot discover elsewhere an exact parallel, and we can never hope to unravel completely a delicate web woven out of so many strands, and settle precisely what was in the mind of an Israelite poet three thousand years ago. But new light on the structure of the book justifies us in separating the story from its context, and from later scholastic interpretations, while we seek with an open mind to recover its permanent message. Within the Old Testament period this story does not seem to have been a matter of doctrinal interest or dogmatic interpretation. The time had not arrived for the formal discussion of original sin, heredity, free-will and fate.

The man who finally shaped the varied traditions into a living story probably lived in the early prophetic period, was touched by the prophetic spirit and entered with genuine sympathy into the hard life of men and women who bear the heavy burden of severe toil and frequent pain. At this stage the serpent does not appear to be a god or demon as in ancient mythology, and certainly not the Satan or Devil of later theology, though in a certain sense related to both, but it is the " most subtle of all the beasts of the field," the symbol of the alluring appeal of temptation and the seductive power of evil. Though God is represented in almost human form, walking in the garden and coming into close contact with His creatures, He is supreme Lord in this small world, serpent as well as man and woman being completely subordinate to His will. Expressed in picture rather than precept there moves through the

story the great belief that disobedience to the divine commands brings sorrow that ends in death.

The story is so well known and is such a fine example of brief dramatic unfolding of the crucial stages that a poor repetition of it might weaken instead of strengthen its effect.[1] The position of the woman is skilfully drawn as " the weaker vessel," she is naturally chosen as the one to be attacked first, as it is well known that to be " weak " in that sense does not mean to be destitute of influence; recently women have gained " votes " but through all the ages they have had " influence." Attention having been called to it in pleasing, plausible, apparently disinterested speech, she tastes the forbidden fruit, and invites her companion to share in the new joy. The thing seemed so attractive, how could one suspect that the pleasure would be so short-lived and the shame so lasting? A few simple strokes give the picture of an ever-recurring tragedy. If we say that the artist has given us a pitiful figure of the woman we must remember that the man is by no means heroic, but rather contemptible. In the story there is tender pity for the woman in her suffering and no strong element of contempt, but there is as yet no suggestion of what we call " chivalry " (cf. Gen. xii. 13). They have travelled together the same hard road; they have suddenly passed from childlike ignorance and innocence; they have gained knowledge, at a terrible price, and the possession seems to be of doubtful value. In the new sense of shame and confusion judgment already casts its dark shadow over

[1] Cf. Sir J. Frazer's fine paraphrase—his attempt to reproduce the original form of the story making the perversion of God's message by the serpent play an important part; and his collection of traditions as to the origin of death.

the trembling, helpless self-condemned pair ; they must appear before their God and render account of their conduct. Overwhelmed with sorrow, they can make no real defence, can only shift the responsibility from one to another. It is an exhibition of weakness that appeals to our pity and should have in it something of terror. The one manifestation of strength of the story finds expression in the stern decrees which gives to each due punishment. There is a sombre sense of the relentlessness of divine justice.

The serpent, once erect, is doomed henceforth to crawl upon the earth, treated by man as the symbol of base cunning and cruel treachery. It has abused the confidence of a trusting woman and can never more be trusted. In the constant warfare that follows, the representative of evil cannot conquer. There may be a reminiscence of the protest against serpent worship or a suggestion of the natural repulsion against slimy snakes, not fit companions for man or beasts. At least, there is an example of appropriate punishment of sin ; subtlety may find easy dupes, but it recoils upon itself, those who are marvellously clever perish in the atmosphere of suspicion that they themselves have created.

To the woman is assigned the hard lot of sorrow and subjection ; she has had to toil hard because man has so often sought to shift a great part of his burden upon her shoulders, even as he tried to get rid of his own responsibility. Motherhood was accepted as a sacred duty and had its joys, but the price was generally paid with bitter pains. Her only " career " was to be the wife of a man who was regarded as her lord, too often it was drudgery, without the compensation of real companionship. As a child she could run round in playful freedom, but in the East womanhood was forced

upon her too soon, the strain of mature life was often heavy, having scarcely any touch of poetry or romance. If this was the result of sin, it came upon this frail creature with oppressive weight and doomed her to a wretched lot. To draw such a picture so sympathetically surely implies a genuine feeling of sympathy.

When driven from the wonderful garden the man must toil unceasingly to gain his living from the reluctant soil; the garden with its light labour, rich beauty and abundant fruitfulness has gone out of his life. Toiling under a hot sun, with painful effort, he must earn his living by the sweat of his brow and be content with small reward. Bowed down under heavy exhausting toil, labour that should possess dignity, yielding a sense of independence and satisfaction, may appear as a curse rather than a blessing, a punishment for wild ambition and reckless self-will. Elsewhere we may learn that idleness is a curse, a curse of man's invention and the mother of many vices; yet we have to confess that incessant toil that crushes the soul, as well as wearying the body, is the sad lot to which many have been doomed. Other pictures in the Old Testament may give us hints of country life that had its days of bright hopefulness and gracious gratitude. Here it is overshadowed by a sense of sin, failure and despondency; bending under a great weight, we see the man, who comes from the soil, spending all his strength in wresting from it a bare living, and in the end going back without any hope of a glorious sphere beyond. It is a dark picture, but there is no cynical scepticism and no splendid outburst of the spirit of revolt, simply a sad and silent submission.

Some scholars have found here a polemic against "culture," or, as the latest phrase in this connexion

is, " civilization criticized at its source," and not merely the general suggestion that increased knowledge of life and its mysteries has brought men and women perplexity and pain. " Is it over-subtle to detect in this aspect of the story a protest against knowledge as a dangerous and wicked thing, and a protest by implication against a civilization to which an ever-accumulating knowledge is indispensable ? Is there not here audible the voice of one who was content with life in its simple rudimentary forms, and who was only too conscious of the perils of a refined and scientific civilization ? " [1] This question has been asked by keen critics, but is there not danger of reading our particular form of social unrest into the beautiful story and spoiling its charming simplicity ? The strength of such stories is often in their vagueness and mystery unlike the sharp specific lines of a scientific statement or a definite polemic. The " simple life " that is pictured here is bare and hard, it is not idealized, there is no touch of the romantic or idyllic. The relation between man and God is close and real, He is the maker and supreme ruler ; man is the helpless creature and submissive servant. Indirectly through the speech of the serpent there is a suggestion of God's jealousy, His watchful care lest man should encroach upon His prerogatives, and snatch the divine gifts of knowledge and immortal life. This is a slight suggestion ; " the man and the woman " are not bold adventurous rebels, with sublime courage and magnificent audacity ; they are shivering frightened creatures, bewildered and overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility that they have brought upon themselves.

[1] Dr. J. E. McFadyen's article, *Hibbert Journal*, July, 1921. *See also* pp. 31 and 108.

It would be an interesting line to examine the theology that has been connected with this story, or to show how the hope of the return of the golden age plays its part in the faith and poetry of later times. That is not the present purpose, the story itself, apart from the connexions and interpretations under which it has often been buried, has still a part to play, treated as a picture of life, showing how men and women bore with dull resignation the burden of toil and pain, with little help from science to lessen labour and few attractions of art to brighten life and without the inspiring hope of faith in a splendid future. There is no glowing Gospel in the story, no buoyant hope that the golden age must soon return, and no strong spiritual consolation. There is calm submission to the will of God, and intense sympathy with man's unceasing struggle and woman's patient endurance. The story does not solve our problems or provide us with a final philosophy of life; but it should rebuke luxurious idleness and vulgar pride. Life for us may be so much richer from the contribution of the intervening centuries to our natural and spiritual inheritance. But the problem of the poor starved life is still with us. We may well ask if, with all the complex machinery of society, our conquest of nature's forces, our appreciation of beauty, we are seeking with the same earnestness to find our way to the heart of things, and come face to face with God.

NOTE.—Professor Jastrow calls attention "to this striking difference, that whereas in the Babylonian tale the woman is the medium leading man to the higher life, in the Biblical story the woman is the tempter who brings misfortune to man. This contrast is, however, not inherent in the Biblical story, but due to the point of view of the Biblical writer, who is somewhat pessimistically inclined and looks upon primitive

life, when man went naked and lived in a garden, eating fruits that grew of themselves, as the blessed life in contrast to advanced culture which leads to agriculture and necessitates hard work as the means of securing one's substance. Hence the woman, through whom Adam eats of the tree of knowledge and becomes conscious of being naked, is looked upon as an evil tempter entailing the loss of the primeval life of bliss in a gorgeous paradise. The Babylonian point of view is optimistic. The change to civilized life—involving the wearing of clothes and the eating of food that is cultivated (bread and wine)—is looked upon as an advance. Hence the woman is viewed as the medium of raising man to a higher level, etc.".

IV. THE FIRST MURDER

Gen. iv. 1–16. The Yahwist, 850 b.c.

Probably more learning and skill have been spent on this passage than on any similar short story, and while the work of scholars has thrown much light on ancient modes of thought, with regard to the specific problems it has not achieved great success. The text has suffered severely, questions are raised to which the story itself gives no definite answer, and there is an antique background, which cannot be completely recovered. The end of the first verse is uncertain, the simplest translation would be, "I have gotten me a man-Yahweh"; this is clearly impossible, and the conjectural emendations are ingenious but not convincing. The seventh verse is quite as hopeless, the puzzling sentence "unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" looks like an imitation of iii. 16, the translation of the rest of the verse is exceedingly difficult. We may regret that there has been no miracle to protect every word of the sacred record against the ravages of time, but we are thankful that so much precious treasure has come to us from the remote past.

When we turn from separate words to the origin and meaning of the story as a whole we meet similar difficulties. Like others of its kind, it lived its own life before it was placed in its present position as part of a world-history. We no longer claim to know when and

where a man first raised his hand to slay his fellow-man. This ancient fragment has no real connexion with the story of Paradise ; it belongs to a larger world peopled by shepherds, husbandmen and others, although definite mention of these classes does not occur until later in the chapter. If Cain wanders into the world, he may meet those who will recognize him as a murderer and slay him. Scholars think that the story, in its original form, reflected the life of certain tribes and not merely of two individuals. That is probable, as the earliest traditions and histories are mostly concerned with tribal life ; the members of the same tribe were regarded as closely connected in flesh and blood, thought and feeling, duty and responsibility. At a time when men enjoyed the advantages of settled life and lived with moderate comfort upon the fruits of the soil, it was quite in accordance with their theology to explain the wretched condition of some degenerate wandering tribe as a curse of God, caused by some ancestral crime. But the attempts to identify the particular tribe as Kenites or others do not give complete satisfaction. Neither do parallels with mythological twin-brothers and ancient city-builders yield much light. We are not sure that Cain and Abel were twins, and the superstitions regarding twins, found elsewhere, cannot be traced in the Old Testament. Whether the name " Abel " is a poetic invention, the name of an extinct tribe or a variant of Jabal, *v.* 20, is also uncertain. To the question in what way was it made known that one sacrifice was accepted and the other rejected there is no clear answer ; whether a statement on this point has been lost, or was so self-evident to ancient readers as not to be necessary, we cannot say.

To the still deeper question, why was Cain's sacrifice rejected and Abel's accepted, there is no definite answer. A thousand years later a Christian teacher can explain that " By faith Abel offered unto God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect to his gifts, and through it he being dead yet speaketh " (Heb. xi. 4; cf. 1 John iii. 12). He speaks from the standpoint of his own time, when a living personal faith was regarded as the central principle of the Christian life. That line of interpretation has been maintained. We are told that " a collateral aim of the narrator is to emphasize the prophetic teaching that it is not the gift but the spirit in which the gift is offered which determines its value in the sight of God." Surely that is a great truth, but one of the results of Old Testament study is to remind us that it was a long painful road that men travelled before they reached that point of view. Even the early prophets did not go so far, but set up a sharp contrast between ritual and goodness (Amos v. 21; Hos. vi. 6; Isa. i. 12). Still later, men learned the spiritual nature of true sacrifice (Ps. li.). But many centuries after this story was written a prophet could use words that are inconsistent with our thought of God. " Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I loved Jacob but Esau I hated " (Mal. i. 2). That quotation is more in accord with the early tribalism upon which our story rests. Three thousand years ago men were by no means to be called backward if they believed that the shepherd and his sacrifice was preferred by their God. It would be a great achievement if religion could now shake off all similar " tribalism." " It is true that we cannot go back to a time when vegetable offerings were

excluded; but such sacrifices must have been introduced after the adoption of agricultural life; and it is quite conceivable that in the early days of the settlement in Canaan the view was maintained, among the Israelites, that the animal offerings of their nomadic religion were superior to the vegetable offerings made to the Canaanite Baals. Behind this may lie (as Gunkel thinks) the idea that pastoral life, as a whole, is more pleasing to Yahweh than husbandry" (Dr. Skinner).

The next important question is not any easier, viz. what is "the mark of Cain," what is its origin and real significance? In popular usage, it is sometimes referred to as a mark which brands the man as a murderer, and sends him out into a hostile world, with the curse of God upon him. In fact, it is a mark to protect him, to remind any one who may think of slaying him that there are those who will avenge his death. He comes under the tribal law that says "a life for a life," and that in some cases may even claim seven lives for one. A passport to-day certifies that a man is a member of a particular nation, that is pledged to protect him from injustice; the tribal mark in early days served the same purpose, in a smaller sphere. When his punishment was assigned to him, the rejection from the cultivated soil, and the doom of a wandering life, the mark was given as an act of mercy to mitigate its severity, in answer to his pathetic cry, "My punishment is greater than I can bear."[1] What was the precise form of "the mark of Cain"? We cannot tell, but that severe justice is tempered with mercy seems to be its spiritual significance.

[1] For cases where the mark was meant to protect others from contagion, see *Folk-lore and the Old Testament.*

These are difficult and may be called curious questions, but they are not fruitless, if considered in the right spirit. After all critical questions have been considered, the story still faces us with a certain provocative and stimulating influence. What a wonderful career it and its like have had ; first a story of two tribes told with simple eloquence to eager listeners, then a bit of writing, imperfect transcript of the spoken word, then a part of the attempt at world-history, and finally a printed page in all the languages of this earth. Cain and Abel now speak to us of life and religion in its earliest stages. There is sad suggestion in the fact that the first quarrel recorded in our Bible is connected with worship, the sacred act which should unite men has given us more than one of the most tragic chapters in the history of mankind. It was not so strange as it might seem at first sight that Abel has come to be enrolled in the long list of heroes and martyrs, who being dead by the manner of their death still speak to us. Envy and strife which destroy real brotherhood, brutal violence the weapon of intolerance, cannot bring a satisfactory solution of spiritual problems.

In our own time, when there has been a severe reaction from the message concerning " the salvation of the soul," and we are told that " the social gospel " is the supreme need, it is well to remember that in early days and under primitive conditions the soul had scarcely been discovered, and social relationships were supreme ; in those days the family or clan was the unit, and in the tribe or nation these found their proper setting. The only case in which a man, and much more a woman, could have any life or " career " was in close association with those of their own blood. Cut off from these natural supports, a man and his family must become

" sojourners " under the friendly patronage of a tribesman, or worse still, wanderers, " tramps," with no real protection. Under such miserable and uncertain conditions, people may live a sort of gipsy life, adventurous and precarious, but it is a blind alley that leads to no true social progress. In our day " the passport " of an honest citizen may open the way for travel outside his own nation, but even that is surrounded with difficulties, and loses much of its power when war kindles fierce passions and fills the world with an atmosphere of hate and suspicion. Civilization, if it is to be worthy of its name, must not lose the vital element of tribal life. The man who acquires immense wealth, cleverly taking advantage of a social structure that he did nothing to create, who shows slight recognition of social responsibilities, and asks in an arrogant tone, " Can I not do what I like with my own ? "—that man is destitute of the feeling of fellowship, which was so precious in those early days, when no man claimed absolute ownership of property or privilege, but rejoiced to make his contribution to the common life. It was a tiny world, a small cultivated land bounded by the " great and terrible wilderness," it knew nothing of " a globe," and the daily chronicle of widely separated events ; but men were beginning to learn the eternal truth, that the strength of men is in brotherly association and mutual helpfulness.

The story in its picturesque style speaks of a deeper, more mysterious sanction than the tribal law of revenge, with its " eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life." There may be in that a wild justice, and society must rest on justice ; but brutal reprisals, the deadly vendetta may destroy society. There is a higher court, above tribal custom, there is an appeal

from earth to heaven. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." The word "cry" is a special term for "the cry of those who suffer from the tyranny of their fellow-men." "He looked for justice but behold oppression, for righteousness but behold a cry" (Isa. v. 7). Nature works in harmony with God, the land refuses to yield its fruits to the murderer, it is outraged by the pollution of innocent blood that lies unburied and unavenged; the appeal ascends to heaven, to the final source of justice. We may dismiss this lightly as "poetry," but it is no mere convention, a form of speech, it expresses reality and there may be behind it a background of mystery that gives it weight. "Thus the murderer is thought to have poisoned the sources of life and thereby jeopardized the supply of food for himself, and perhaps for others. On this view, it is intelligible that a homicide should be shunned and banished the country to which his presence is a continual menace. He is plague-stricken, surrounded by a poisonous atmosphere, infected by a contagion of death, his very touch may blight the earth" (Frazer's *Folk-lore*, etc., i. 79).

A more primitive view found elsewhere treats the earth as a divinity that is angered by the shedding of innocent blood, but when our story was written the Hebrews regarded the earth as the creature of their own God. Even in their crudest forms, those conceptions have in them an element of truth, a craving after real justice; only a superficial judgment sweeps them aside as "superstitions." The author just quoted puts the case clearly and forcibly, in the following paragraph:

"We may smile if we please at these quaint fancies of vengeful ghosts, shrieking gore, or earth opening her

mouth to drink blood or to vomit out her guilty inhabitants; nevertheless it is probable that these and many other notions equally unfounded have served a useful purpose in fortifying the respect for human life by the adventitious aid of superstitious terror. The venerable framework of society rests on many pillars, of which the most solid are nature, reason, and justice. Yet at certain stages of its slow and laborious progress it could ill afford to have dispensed with the frail prop of superstition. If the day should ever come when the great edifice has been carried to completion and reposes in simple majesty on adamantine foundations it will be possible, without risk to its stability, to cut away and destroy the rotten timbers that shored it up in the process of building." True, when the building is complete the scaffolding can be removed, but in the meantime we recognize that "the common people" must have the fundamental ideas in concrete poetic forms.

Finally it is now clear what is meant if we speak of "the insolence of Cain," and why the spirit that moves behind his definite question is severely condemned. "Am I my brother's keeper?" This question comes ringing down the ages, and it will never die until all our social questions are solved. Insolence in this sense is not careless rudeness or foolish bravado, it is not light mockery of respectable conventions, the aggressive tone of the superior persons; it is brazen contempt of the fundamental laws of life. In those days they could not use fine phrases about self-expression and the realization of the individual life in society. But the great truth that, in a limited form, they achieved for themselves and bequeathed to us, is that men are each other's keepers and that only by mutual service can their life be maintained. The man who sets his puny

will against that central truth makes himself a traitor and an outlaw. Hence even if there was in it some touch of mercy, " the mark of Cain " will always carry a sinister significance.

V. THE STORY OF THE GREAT FLOOD

GEN. VI. 5—IX. 17. YAHWIST, 850. PRIESTLY WRITER, 550 B.C.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS. The question whether the Primitive History is an indictment and condemnation of civilization has been discussed, in a general fashion; here it forces itself again upon our attention.[1] It has been pointed out, by one of the keenest critics[2] of this section, that as "a primitive history of mankind it possesses a moral and religious sublimity which is unequalled by anything that any other people can place alongside of it," and that the following considerations must be taken into account.

(1) While the desire of the compiler was probably, in the first place, to produce a chronological series, he has arranged the material in such a way as to suggest that there may have been before his mind the purpose of showing the gradual and terrible increase of corruption among men after the Fall, the childish sin of "the man and woman," the brutal murder of a brother, the fierce spirit of revenge in Lamech's song, the attempt to break down the division between the human and the divine (vi. 2), the widespread wickedness that caused the flood, the weakness of the pious Noah and the impiety in his family, the ever-increasing arrogance that would build a tower and scale the

[1] Cf. page 18. [2] H. Gunkel.

heavens. These events placed side by side tend to produce that impression. (2) That he may have thought also of the mercy of God who did not exact from the first pair the full penalty of disobedience, who had delight in Abel's piety, and warned Cain of his danger, who recognized the righteousness of Noah and showed mercy to the world through him, who when men were scattered by his judgment chose Abraham and founded a new people. (3) But we must note also the separateness of the stories in their original form; and their very loose connexion in their present form; that even within the Yahwist group of stories there are parallel lines, and duplicate traditions. Evidently there is not much encouragement to build a theological theory on the present order of the documents, as it rests on an external arrangement more than on the substance of the stories.

Much learning and diligence have been spent upon the investigation of traditions regarding the great flood. Until quite recent times both the literal and allegorical interpretations of this particular story were defended; the size and capacity of the ark were seriously discussed, and Noah was treated as a type of the Christ (Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopædia*, 1894). We recognize frankly that there is no longer any help along that line. We are compelled to accept from teachers of science and students of folk-lore, (*a*) that there is no possibility of finding a place for such a deluge within the historical period. A flood that destroyed the whole human race save a small remnant belongs to the realm of tradition or mythology; (*b*) while traditions of a great flood are widespread they are not found in all nations; they do play a great part in the legends of various tribes and nations, but the

large survey now possible makes it unlikely that they were ever absolutely universal; (*c*) that, when carefully observed and classified, the flood-stories cannot be said to have a common centre, though the Babylonian story seems to have exerted a powerful influence over a wide region. Neither do they all come from one cause: in places where they took their rise various motives were at work, traditions of actual floods, mythological symbolism and rudimentary science or observation of natural phenomena. Our business is not with physical science, nor comparative mythology, so we must be content with this bare summary of generally accepted results, and seek the theological teaching and the spiritual meaning.

There is large agreement among modern scholars as to the nature and meaning of the Biblical story: (*a*) That we have here a case where two accounts have been blended, and that they can be separated by observing the two different names for God, and other differences of language, substance and style. It is claimed that the division of this twofold story into its original elements, resting upon the general documentary theory, and the special work of a succession of scholars, is one of the most satisfactory and convincing pieces of literary analysis. We have the Yahwist story, with its peculiar vocabulary, picturesque style and anthropomorphic view of God, its simpler chronology, its recognition of sacrifice in primitive times and the provision of animals for that purpose. The Priestly document shows its usual characteristics of formal precise statement, exact definition, belief that the name "Yahweh" and the ordinance of sacrifice were unknown to pre-Mosaic times; a fine poetic feature is retained from earlier sources by this document, viz.

the beautiful symbol of the rainbow, but it uses this in its own fashion to mark a new stage of history, a new covenant with mankind according to its general theory of the Primitive History.

(*b*) That these two accounts draw their material from the Babylonian flood-story is clear to those who have studied the question in a thorough and an impartial spirit, after reviewing not only the fragments from early Greek literature but also the abundant material supplied by recent discoveries. The history of Babylonia stretches far into the remote past, to a time long before the Hebrews came into Palestine. Great floods are at home in that region, especially in early times before the vast system of irrigation and drainage was completed. The story of the great flood, in Babylonian literature, is only one episode in a great mythological epic which has now been translated and carefully examined. It is a rich luxuriant growth, concrete, poetic, and to our modern taste grotesque. It is real mythology, as it tells of intrigues and quarrels among the gods, and the rescue from the general catastrophe of a *clever* man, through the intervention of a god whose favourite he was. It is the product of a coarse polytheism, but has its majestic features, and must have made a powerful impression with its vivid descriptions of pitiful destruction on earth, conflict and confusion in the heavens. "Regarded purely as poetry, it has a kind of primitive force, haunting voices that respond to the great problems of human life, suffering, death, and the future, dramatic vividness of representation and utterance, a painting of character, and depicting of nature which produces striking effects with few strokes" (Baumgarten, quoted by Goodspeed, p. 91). In the last scene "The gods

smell the odour," "The gods smell the goodly odour." "Like flies they swarm around the offerer of sacrifice." In comparison with all this luxuriance of detail and energetic movement, the Hebrew story is short, simple and even tame; the nearest in spirit is the statement that Yahweh *smelled* Noah's sacrifice and vowed that He would no more curse the ground (viii. 21J). The sending forth of the dove is also a fine poetic feature, but what the earliest Hebrew writer has given us is a story, probably popular before his time, used as a sermon to illustrate and enforce certain important lessons concerning the wickedness of men and the righteousness of God. The heathen gods, in the great Babylonian poem, show wild passion, jealous caprice, low cunning and brutal violence. The sober monotheism of the Hebrew story may not yield a plot so exciting and fascinating; but it is a stronger and safer foundation for a noble religion one of whose strongest beliefs, in the face of selfish luxury and unbridled lawlessness, must be that there is a righteous God who rules the world.

The Practical Exposition. One remark must be made in passing from criticism to interpretation, which is applicable here and elsewhere; that is, when the suggestion of a great truth is discovered in an ancient story and thus lifted into the larger light of our own time, it inevitably becomes larger. We may say that in a sense it has "suffered a *time* change into something rich and strange." In other words, the interpreter, however much he may be on his guard against reading the thoughts of his time into earlier oracles, cannot escape from his own shadow, he cannot completely become a citizen of a world that has long since passed away. A great thought is like the genie of the ancient

fable, when once released from its narrow boundaries it cannot easily be compressed into them again. This is because we have a greater God, a larger world, a more subtle atmosphere ; and because ideas are subject to the same law as men, they must when lifted into the light grow or die.

1. During the past fifty years, we have spent so much time and thought discussing the long, slow, silent processes, and spoken so much about gradual "evolution," that we have been driven out of sympathy with the "catastrophic" idea, the overwhelming calamity that comes suddenly, after a long period of quiet preparation. Ancient thinkers on the other hand, specially among the Hebrews, approached world affairs from the opposite point of view. From records more scanty, their observations more limited, what we call "historical perspective" had not been gained, and careful analysis of the causal relation of events was unknown. They knew simple things that are also deep things, that grass springs up quickly, that the oak grows slowly, that the boy is in some sense "the father of the man." But in public life their attention was arrested by the startling event or the strong personality. They believed in "Judgments of God," sometimes they learned by patience and experience that "the mills of God grind slowly," but on the whole, it was the sensational, the dramatic in history that impressed them most powerfully. This ancient story became to the men of prophetic spirit the symbol of the terrible catastrophe that comes upon a careless world, slumbering in false security, blind to the signs of its approaching fate. "They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood

came and destroyed them all" (Luke xvii. 27). How far away from our life, how foreign to our thought was this strange utterance until we were called upon to witness a world tragedy of unparalleled extent.

2. The thought that increase of population, with the growth of wealth and power in the hands of selfish and arrogant men, may bring dishonour to a nation and ruin to society; this has received abundant illustration in the course of the world's long history and it still faces us to-day. The stern demand for soberness, truth and honesty still speaks in prophetic tones. War, revolution, famine, bring these awful lessons, when the moral foundations of society are rotten. In the great cities to-day civilization finds its perils and Christianity its problems. We are tempted to think that it is against the law of God that such vast masses of people should be herded together; yet many of the world's great cities have an attraction, a pride and glory of their own. The glaring contrasts of sordid slavery and inglorious ease, of wretched poverty and vulgar wealth at times oppress our hearts with shame and strike terror to our souls. To denounce discontent and the spirit of revolt will not suffice; we must toil bravely for a noble simplicity of life and an increase of real brotherhood.

3. It may help us in this to note that the story in its childlike style declares the patience of God. The world that man has cunningly built up in his cleverness and pride is swept away; daring schemes of conquest and aggression have met a stern rebuke. God has been driven to ask the question, which has sometimes trembled on the lips of mortal men: Was it worth while to make such a world? But He will not make an absolutely new beginning, the best from the old

must be preserved and carried forward to make a world more in harmony with the divine purpose. This may not be exactly the prophetic doctrine of the remnant, but it is akin to it. It may seem alien to our democratic doctrine of the saving power of majorities, but there is a permanent truth in it. Democracy without " men of light and leading " is a pitiful spectacle. In the dark night of defeat, exile, revolution or whatever other form the tragedy may take, the word of truth, the growing revelation must be kept alive by the few men of faith and vision. Those who attempt to make a complete break with the past, contemning its traditions and despising its lessons, will bring forth freakish reforms destined to be still-born or shortlived. God must save something from the wreck as an everlasting heritage.

4. It may startle us even more to find that God discovers, through this sad experience, that force, even when on the side of righteousness, is not a complete remedy for spiritual evils. " And Yahweh said in his heart (to his mind or to himself) I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ; neither will I again smite any more every living thing as I have done " (viii. 21). The trouble lies in the mind and heart of men ; it is deep seated (Ps. xcv. 10). The story cannot tell us how the heart can be conquered and cleansed ; it is prophetic in its helplessness as well as in its partial insight. It does, however, suggest that a deluge may destroy men, and yet only reveal without solving the problem of man's perversity. Man may be buffeted and beaten, checked and thwarted, and yet this stubborn heart remains hard and defiant. We have been slow to learn the lesson, though God is

represented as having discovered and revealed it long ago : yet the very heart of our Gospel is that the only power capable of conquering the soul is that of Love.

5. After the catastrophe God points to the common order, pledges Himself to its maintenance and asks man to find his true life in it. "While the earth remaineth seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (viii. 22). On this note the prophetic story ends ; there is in these words a restful hope, a calm recognition of God moving calmly in the great world. In the Priestly writer the promise that the drastic judgment shall not be repeated, and no more shall a flood come to cut off all flesh, takes the form of a covenant of which the rainbow is a sign ; a covenant of mercy between the God of Heaven and "Every living creature." The "order of nature" meant to both these writers something infinitely less extensive and significant than it may mean to us. Since then through all the centuries philosophy, science and poetry have enriched and glorified the great conception. We may each, according to our capacity, find in Nature a revelation of God ; but to all of us the great truth is welcome, that after the storm which has overwhelmed the world, wrecked great empires, and left desolation in its track we must seek patiently to contribute our share to the making of the new world, resting our souls upon the fact that the storm is "His strange work," and that the sun is the symbol of His gentle ministry : in the common round and the daily task we may find the fuller revelation of the Divine Presence that gives meaning and hope to our life.

VI. THE TOWER OF BABEL

Gen. xi. 1–9. J, 850

We have here an interesting story, in nine verses, that seems to be a good illustration of the fact that the earliest stories that circulated in a non-literary age were exceedingly brief, capable of being easily carried by the memory. And yet it has been suggested that, even here, two stories are blended and that the two motives, the scattering of mankind and the confusion of tongues, were at one time separate.[1] This will seem to many to be a specimen of a criticism that is over-subtle and that runs to wild extremes. It calls attention, however, to the two questions raised by the story, how is it that men coming from one pair are scattered so widely over the earth, and how does it come to pass that the common speech has produced such a variety of tongues? If this conjecture is correct, the name, a play upon the word "scatter," in which the tower-story found its climax has been lost.

The Two Stories. (1) The City-story.—And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech, and they said, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly, and they said, go to, let us build us a city, and let us make us a name. Then said Yahweh,

[1] *See* Gunkel and Skinner.

Behold they are one people and they have all one language. Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech, then must they cease from building the city. Therefore was the name of it called Babel because Yahweh did there confound the language of all the earth. (2) THE TOWER-STORY.—And it came to pass as they journeyed in the East, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and they dwelt there. There they used brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. (And they said, Let us build) a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. "This is what they began to do and now nothing will be withholden from them which they purpose to do," and from thence did Yahweh scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

If this conjecture is well founded the Tower-story probably ended in a name which meant "scattering" just as the City-story found its climax in the name "Babel," in the sense of confusion. The great city was to make "a name" for its builders, that is, to give them supremacy and renown. The high tower was to serve as a landmark that could be seen from a great distance and so provide a rallying point. Thus the union of the two is quite natural. The story in its present form belongs to the Yahwist school and is evidently very early. It is Hebrew in its present form, but with reminiscences of Babylon and ancient polytheism shining dimly through, but the subjects with which it deals, the origin of different nations, and the cause of the great varieties of speech are of perpetual interest; the latest science can give only imperfect

solutions to many of the problems involved in these two questions.

This, whether composite or simple, is a separate story having no real connexion where it stands. The contents of the previous chapter are summed up in x.32: "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations in their nations; and of these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." And xi. 10 ff. carries the generations of Shem, one of the sons of Noah, down to the time of Abraham the father of the Hebrew people. The scene of the story is in Babylonia, but the spirit and style of it are distinctly Palestinian. The great city is seen through the eyes of one who knew and loved the hills and dales of the small country. We have the surprise of a stranger at the plentiful use of brick for rearing such wonderful buildings, and the peasant's mingled bewilderment, admiration and fear at the sights and sounds of an immense city. No Babylonian would have explained the name "Babel" to mean "confusion"; for him it was an appropriate name for a majestic temple-tower, namely "the gate of God." We know that Babylon was not the home or the creation of primitive man, the history of civilization and of Babylonian city states stretches back into a far more remote period. One who has scanned all these questions carefully tells us that "the double legend is a product of naïve reflection on such facts of experience as the diversity of mankind, its want of a common language, and its consequent inability to bend its united energies to the accomplishment of some enduring memorial of human greatness. The contrast between the condition of things and the ideal unity of the race at its origin haunted the mind with a sense of fate and discomfiture,

and prompted the questions when and where and for what reason was this doom imposed upon men. The answer naturally assumed the legendary form, the concrete features of the representation being supplied by the vivid impressions of the achievements of civilization in its most ancient centre in Babylonia" (Skinner's *Genesis*).

More important than the particular answers that were given to these everlasting questions is the fact that they were asked at all; it shows that a living belief in one God, even in a simple form, stimulates intellectual activity, as well as reverent worship. Truly, the living spirit of God was working among a people who, when so much strength was absorbed in the conquest and defence of their home, sought not merely "the joy of harvest," the supply of wheat and wine, but also gave thought to these great questions, "bruised their brains" against the stubborn facts of life, in the attempt to find the meaning and purpose of history.

What we now distinguish as science, theology, religion, are here blended in simple forms; for convenience in our effort at appreciation and interpretation we may separate them at least in thought.

I. *The Science that Decays.* Among a living people knowledge changes continually, whether it is the precise knowledge that we call "science" or that less fully organized kind that we call "common sense." Some questions that puzzled men ages ago are cleared up and finally settled; others that men thought to be simple are now seen to be full of mystery or practically unsolvable. Science has given wonderful revelations and endowed men with strange powers; realms that were dark and uncertain have been brought under the

"reign of law." Long-buried cities have yielded up their secrets and enabled scholars to write new chapters of the world's history. Even now we cannot fathom the mystery of the precise mode of creation, form a definite image of the first human pair or gain a clear conception of the primeval language. But it is possible for us to have a range of knowledge regarding the distribution of the races of mankind and the relations of different groups of languages that was quite impossible for the most learned men three thousand years ago. We know that Babylon was not the first great city, its power and splendour belong to a comparatively late period in Babylonian history. We do not know what particular temple-tower[1] gave rise to the moralizings of the story-teller, but we know that there were such towers in Babylonia that would be highly impressive to a rustic stranger; these had both a religious and scientific use, being both temples and observatories, as the watching of the heavenly bodies and worship of star-gods played a supreme part in Babylonian religion. If the name Babel is to be explained from the Assyrio-Babylonian language this name "gate of God" is significant and beautiful with no suggestion of reproach or ridicule. And with regard to the origin of variations in language, we are compelled to change the order adopted in the story. Instead of the scattering being caused by the difference of speech,

[1] It is claimed that the Sumerians, a non-Semitic race, who created the earliest civilization in Babylonia, built "their ziggurats on temple-towers, of huge masses of unburnt brick which rose high above the surrounding plain, and that their ideal was to make each 'like a mountain.' It has been argued that they were a mountain race, and the home from which they sprang has been sought in central Asia." King & Hall: *Egypt and Western Asia in the Light of Recent Research.*

it is when tribes are separated and cut off from communication with each other that the different dialects and languages grow, and attain a distinct character. But such questions had to be asked and some answer found if science was to begin and make any real progress. Many answers that men gave to important questions are now out of date, and if we can avail ourselves of the results of generations of toil, that is no reason why we should give ourselves the credit of being superior persons. It is true that the supreme purpose of the Bible is to teach religion and not science, yet if *men* were to write it they must be the children of their own age. To a simple-minded man the diversity of speech which formed a barrier between different tribes and nations seemed to be not only an inconvenience but a curse which had come as a punishment for sinful arrogance. While we rejoice in the rich exuberance of life, which spurns uniformity and manifests its energy in endless variety, we sometimes feel that the existence of so many languages, in a world that has now become so small, is a hindrance to free intercourse and the realization of the fullest brotherhood. In such a moment we can sympathize with the feeling which lies behind the imperfect science expressed in this story.

II. *The Theology that Changes.* Theology means not our answer to any particular question of science but our view of the world as a whole, and especially the relation of God to the world that He has made. To us the highest expression of such relation is the conception of the "Lord and Father of Mankind" who has revealed the glory of His love and the power of His redemptive mercy in Jesus Christ. That view could not be revealed and appropriated at one stroke

in the early days; the thought of God as King came first, and at that time a King was despotic and cruel. In those days men interpreted sudden calamities and terrible catastrophes as fierce manifestations of jealousy on the part of the gods. Those gods could brook no rival near the throne and watched with keen vigilance any attempts on the part of men to assume a godlike attitude and achieve daring and distinguished deeds. Later, men learned that the "curses" did not come from mere caprice, but, while God was jealous of His own honour, His chief concern was to rebuke men, on account of their overweening arrogance. The pride that goeth before a fall was, in itself, sinful, and exercised a blinding influence which was one cause of the fall. Thus men learned slowly to connect the order of the world with the thought of the righteousness of God. We must concede that in this very old story the idea of "the jealousy of God" has some of the coarse crude features; what we call "the paganism" has not been completely refined away. It is a long process by which "the precious and the vile" are separated (Jer. xv. 19), and man's noblest conceptions of God reach clearness and strength.

III. *The Religion that Abides.* It is difficult to separate religious feeling from the particular form in which it finds expression, it can only be done roughly; but may we not, in this case, fix upon this feeling that danger lurks in the possession of great power, as the distinctive religious feeling of the story? That boastfulness is sinful, that arrogance is irreverent and impious, that a towering overbearing pride is a challenge to God, an insult to heaven, this is the feeling of a true and simple "faith." It springs from the soul that is touched by reverential awe in the presence of

the mysteries of life; it bases itself on common experience, and as history grows, it finds ampler illustrations in the fall of kingdoms and the wreck of empires. Surely union, co-operation for a common purpose, is a noble thing if the purpose is honourable. As Carlyle saw with his wonderful power of vision, the power of one man to control and inspire thousands is one of the real miracles in the life of humanity, and *discipline* is something magical, nay even mystical.[1] But some of the most awful calamities in the history of the world have come through the misuse of unbridled power, wielding for tyrannical purposes a wonderfully constructed machine. That men of similar speech and ideals shall unite for mutual help and the satisfaction of national feelings is right; but power thus gained, used in a selfish spirit, in the long run brings disaster to the nation and creates confusion in the world. Men have often said if we could only unite, have one speech, one purpose, there is no limit to what we could accomplish. The ancient Hebrews went nearer to the heart of things when, in spite of appearances, they said "there is a limit, there is God."

Note to Chapter VI

The following contrast is striking and suggestive; whether it does full justice to Egyptian religion cannot be discussed here.

"The episode of the Tower of Babel, qualified by Hebrew anger against Babylon as a punishment of the Lord (Gen. xi. 1 ff.), preserves in an expression the reason for the existence of this building: the top of the tower was to reach up to heaven. We have already recorded how in the Babylonian religion the most important place was left to the deities of the moon and stars. To approach as nearly as possible to the starry sky at

[1] *The French Revolution*, li. c. 11.

night to seek out the will of the gods was the object of the Zikkurat. And this indication of an aspiration towards the heavens as the seat of the god and the spiritual character of the religion can be better appreciated when we recall the architectural forms of the religious buildings of the Egyptians, their constant tendency to descent beneath the earth, a tendency which is manifested more often in the temple than elsewhere, when the way leads from the lofty pylons of the entrance downward to the small dark chamber where the image of the god is kept. The history of architecture has again found this aspiration towards heaven in Christianity in the Gothic Church by the same line of descent from the Semitic spirit." *Religion and Art*, p. 143.

VII. THE ABRAHAM CYCLE

Genesis xii. ff., Various Dates

The name of Abraham must always stand out boldly in the realm of religious history ; it brings before us the memory of a great ideal figure, towards which men of earlier generations turned for instruction and inspiration, and we believe that it will maintain its place in the popular portrait gallery of heroes and saints, whatever may be the final conclusion that is reached by careful study as to the origin and nature of the stories that have gathered round this name. The three most powerful and aggressive religions of the world look back to Abraham as their spiritual ancestor, " the father of the faithful." This is firmly fixed in the common traditional view, and it is beneficent in its influence, in so far as the picture presented glorifies the great qualities of faith, loyalty and self-sacrificing obedience. But to the special student he is not an historical person in the same sense as David or Isaiah ; he is placed in Israel's dim prehistoric period, we speak of " the time of Abraham," but we have no clear idea of any definite place and period to which he belongs. A careful scrutiny finds in these narratives wide difference of historical background, theological tone and religious ideal.

This cycle of stories shows the first attempts to produce something like a " biography," by placing side by

side stories of various origin. The story of Isaac is a slight transitional sketch, but in the lives of Jacob and Joseph there is not only richness of picturesque material but also a striving after unity. The method and spirit of these ancient compilations may be illustrated from this cycle, as well as from other important groups gathered round the great names of Samuel, David and Elijah. Genesis xiv. is a narrative that has a place of its own ; it cannot be connected with any of the three great documents, and fierce discussions have raged round the point whether it is to be regarded as early history or late Jewish legend. It is quite different in its style and structure from the others. Here Abram is a great warrior, who with the band of trained soldiers born in his house conquers great armies and slaughters great kings. It is a wonderful story and finds its climax in a declaration meant to show Abram's unselfishness and magnanimity. "I have lifted up my hand to Yahweh God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread nor a shoelatchet, nor aught that is thine lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." In the other stories the patriarch does not show just that kind of pride and does not scruple to receive presents, as well as to give them.

The Priestly Chronicles

The Priestly writer has a genealogical scheme, and some of his slight notices, such as xii. 4, 5, xvi. 6, etc., are woven into the other stories (*see also* xxv. 11 ff., l. 12, 13), but the main contributions of this school are found in chapters xvii. and xxiii., the institution of circumcision and the purchase of a field and cave for a burial-place from "the children of Heth" ; except in the *one* point, the promise of a son to be called Isaac,

these narratives have no contact with the other stories (J and E). We need not dwell upon these statements at great length as they are not " ancient stories " in the strict sense, though they may rest upon traditions that are earlier than the time of the writer. The characteristics of the Priestly school are plainly visible ; [1] Abram begins a new period or stage in the history of the world. There is a special name for God, El-Shaddai, a new religious institution, circumcision, and the name Abram is changed to Abraham. All is precise, formal statement, seeking to be exact in its details and losing the vague atmosphere and picturesque style of popular story. The name El-Shaddai is probably ancient, though its meaning and early associations are not clear. The names Abraham, Abram, Abiram are all now believed to be dialectical variations of the same name, so that in the change of name we have a play upon the sound rather than a scientific derivation (cf. xxxii. 29). More important than the verbal forms is the thought of the ancient times that the change of name implied a change of character and destiny (Gen. xxxii. 28).

The earlier prophetic documents (J and E) had accounts of a covenant between the God of Israel and Abram, the promise made under the starry sky, " Look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to tell them ; and he said unto him, so shall thy seed be " ; and there are solemn sacrificial ceremonies, the heavy sleep and horror of great darkness (xv.). In the Priestly narrative (xvii.) there is no splendour of nature, no mystic symbolism, but a plain statement that when God appears to the patriarch it is to institute a covenant with him, to make him the founder of a religion, the father of a nation, indeed the father of many nations,

[1] *See* ch. ix.

even though he is now childless. It has been pointed out that the Priestly writer regarded this as a matter of fundamental importance and recurred to it often in the course of his slight historical sketch (xxxv. 12 ; Exod. ii. 24 ; vi. 3 f.), see also the striking passage Lev. xxvi. 42 f., where comfort for the exiles in Babylon is based on these earlier covenants.

Circumcision thus connected with Abraham is an old religious custom, coming from primitive tribal times and continued during long periods among nations near to and far away from the Israelites. In Joshua v. it is referred to as an ancient rite which had not been practised in the wilderness, and the conservatism of religious ceremonial is shown in the use of flint knives. The strange story, an ancient fragment (J), Exodus iv. 24, may be meant to show the transference of the rite to the time of infancy instead of youthful manhood. P's supreme interest is not in this kind of history but springs from the fact that this ceremony gained increased significance in later Judaism, and that it was necessary to give it a prominent place as one of the chief points in the covenant relationship between the God of Israel and His people ; according to his scheme the sabbath was given at creation, circumcision was revealed to Abraham, but Moses included these institutions in a perfect and everlasting system of law and ritual.

The story how Abraham acquired a burial-place in a land where he was a stranger and a sojourner, is precisely the kind in which a legal writer would delight ; there was no need of any great power of imagination, he had merely to reproduce the regular style of making bargains and contracts which existed in his own day, and which continue in the East down to our own time

and present a striking contrast to the quick bustling methods of the West. This story has no parallel in the other documents, and we cannot say upon what basis of tradition it may rest. Whether the cave was in an earlier form a sanctuary and had primitive religious associations is uncertain, here we have simply a business transaction without any suggestion of ritual; a transaction between the patriarch and a foreigner in which he shows a dignified courtesy, a tenacious perseverance and a strict businesslike attitude. The Hebrews buried their dead and attached great importance to the family grave, and is this not a pathetic feature that when "the father of the faithful" lost his wife and needed to bury his dead out of sight, he did not own a plot for that purpose in the land which was to be the home of his children? These friendly strangers will give a grave, but that does not meet the case; surely a man must own the land in which his loved ones are buried. At last the price is stated, and he is told that it is a trifle which between friends does not really amount to anything; trifle or not he will pay exactly what is asked, and have the money weighed in current coin, and the transaction settled in due legal form; so he acquires the portion of earth, which is some day needed for rich and poor alike, and in due time he is laid by the side of his wife (xxv. 9).

The Prophetic History: The Great Adventure

The story of Abram in the prophetic narrative (J. & E.) is woven from many strands; it tells how the patriarch came into Palestine with his nephew Lot, and undertook a journey into Egypt, how Abraham showed his magnanimity when it was necessary for the two families to separate. The connexion with Lot

ceases when Sodom has been destroyed and he dwells "in the mountain"; the origin of the Moabites and Ammonites is thus explained, the meaning of their names and their relationship to the Hebrews (xix. 37, 38). The main subject is carried through varied scenes, the promise to the patriarch that his seed shall possess the land, the birth of Ishmael, who cannot be regarded as the true heir but who is to become the father of powerful tribes, the gift of a legitimate son who by marriage, to one of his own race, is to prepare the way for the fulfilment of the promise. These stories, some of them quite short, others with richness of detail and beauty of description (*see* xxiv.), form a wonderful series, and it is evident that great care and skill have been spent on the compilation. Close examination, by special students, shows that not only have the two earlier documents been drawn upon, but also that within the earliest strata there are signs of varying traditions. But the breaks in the connexion and the duplication in details do not completely destroy the fine general impression, the picture of a pious man who because of his obedience towards God and his generosity towards his fellow-men could be regarded as the worthy ancestor of a chosen race. The great lesson is that God fulfils His promises, even though such fulfilment may at times seem impossible; to a faithful righteous people a high destiny is appointed.

The name of Abraham or Abiram has been discovered in early documents as the name of a man, and there is no need to regard it as the name of a tribe or of an ancient god.[1] But this does not mean that we can treat the stories as the biography of a particular man who lived a thousand years before the time of

[1] For the Babylonian Abram *see* Barton, p. 292.

Moses. How this name came to be selected as that of the ancestor of all the Hebrew tribes is a question that we cannot answer. The stories grew and were gathered around this name in the early years of the Hebrew kingdom. That which gives them reality and interest is the religious ideal, not that they reveal definite facts of ancient history. The views that Abraham came from Babylonia, that he brought from there a kind of monotheism, or that he was driven out by the crude polytheism of his neighbours; these belong to later traditions and have no foundation in the primitive stories (Josh. xxiv. 2). The attempts to discover in the stories traces of the migrations of early Hebrew tribes cannot be considered here and do not yield clear results. It is recognized that the Hebrews are related to the Arameans, and that Canaan was not their original home. The coming into Canaan, as seen in this picture of their ancestor was *an act of faith*, which is true of all great movements. Thus the name of the patriarch has become a symbol and a type; it represents those who at the call of God and duty go out into the unknown, who make the daring choice in the critical hour of life, face the great adventure, going out into the darkness because they believe that the call comes from the God of light (Heb. xi. 8). The great thing to the writer was not that a great man in the past showed faith, but that the Israel of his own day should manifest the same principle. That a great religious impulse was at work in the birth of the Hebrew nation is a fact of history, that has given form and colour to the ancient stories. It was in the name of their God that they achieved the measure of unity which made the conquest and settlement possible. Abraham possesses only a tomb in Canaan. Moses never enters the land, only sees it

from afar, but they represent the spirit of promise and prophecy which saved the pious, patriotic Israelites from defeat and despair.

This is a simple but noble faith that traces prosperity to religion and righteousness. Naturally, at that early period, it stands squarely on the national basis; the friends of Israel will be regarded as friends of Israel's God and their enemies as His enemies. The prophetic missionary idea is not yet born; [1] when the text is carefully examined and the various passages compared, we see that the promise declares that the position and success of the Hebrews shall be such that those who see them shall desire similar blessing for themselves (cf. xxii. 18). And so Abraham, though he had no fixed abode, travels through the land from Shechem southward to Hebron, and the story connects his name with several ancient sanctuaries and the worship under the sacred trees.

It would not be honest to claim that the Israelite view of life was in this early period a lofty and complete one. If we take the stories in xii. 10 ff., xx., xxvi., we have three similar incidents, the first two told of Abram and the third of Isaac. We are not now concerned with particular historical details; whether there were camels in Egypt at that time, or whether the Philistines were then in the land. The same incident *might* happen twice in a man's life and be repeated in the life of his son. The statement of scholars that an advance in *refinement* and delicacy of treatment can be traced when the stories are read in the order of their age is more interesting. This is, as might be expected, in accordance with the fact that the influence of the higher

[1] For this compare such passages as Isa. ii. 2–4; xxv. 5–8; xlii. 1–4.

religion made itself felt in all realms of life. The two points that arrest our attention in the stories when read in the light of Christian teaching, are the lack of frank truthfulness and of what we call " chivalrous " regard for the feelings and honour of women. There is a sufficient scarcity of these virtues to-day, but from our ideal we look upon lying as the defence of the weak, defensible only in the most extreme circumstances, and we think that a man who would thrust a woman into danger to save himself is guilty of contemptible cowardice. These strong feelings need not be weakened by the recognition of the fact that the moral standards of that age were different from our own ; woman was the property of the man, and lying was a venial sin. On the whole a soft atmosphere surrounds the figure of the patriarch ; obedient, gentle, kind, he may be, but not a strong, determined heroic soul.

The Supreme Sacrifice, Genesis xxii. (Elohist, 750 b.c.)

This is one of the finest pieces of story-telling. Reasons have been given why we can no longer regard it as literal history, or in its present form as a *photograph* of an actual scene. It has to be judged as one of the series of stories that have been grouped around this venerable name. There is large agreement that it comes to us from the prophetic period, five centuries after the Hebrews came into Canaan. It breathes the prophetic spirit and suggests by a living illustration that not only is the ideal leader, Abraham, a man of faith and obedience, but also that " to obey is better than sacrifice " (cf. 1 Sam. xv. 22).

It is better, then, to call it a sermon or picture. Such things did happen, it is not a question of the

credibility of this particular form of sacrifice, but of the true interpretation of a noble piece of literature (Judges xi. ; 2 Kings iii. 27 ; Micah vi.). It can scarcely be regarded as a direct attack on child-sacrifice, probably at the time it was written there was no great danger from that direction. The prophets when they attack that grim superstition do so with fierce energy and sharp speech (Jer. vii. ; xxxii. 35 ; Ezek. xvi. 21). It is not clear where the sacrifice was to be offered, perhaps in the land of the Amorites ; and the key-word which should form the climax is doubtful (for name as climax cf. Gen. xi. 9). But the main current of the story moves smoothly, the tone is gentle, the style simple. Our attention is arrested, we watch the father go forth on his sad errand, when " the place " which is, of course, "a high place," a sanctuary, is seen from afar, our interest deepens. The servants must be left behind ; this is a solemn business between the man and his God. The dialogue between the man and the boy is delicate and suggestive ; the tension is maintained in a quiet restrained manner until the climax is reached. To realize the full power of such a story we must think of the impression it made when *heard* for the first time. In the ancient story two things in which the modern story-teller delights are absent ; elaborate description of scenery and subtle analysis of the soul. Without those doubtful accessories the purpose is accomplished, the picture given of a man prepared to go to the utmost length on the path of obedience, even to give to his God his only son upon whom the future of his family, and the continuance of his own name depends.

An attempt has been made, and not without a measure of success, to go behind the eighth-century sermon

and find a substratum of historical fact. On this view the foundation is a tradition how at a certain place named Jeruel [1] a ram came to be offered in place of the child. The arguments for the particular name can only be fully appreciated after a careful reading of the Hebrew text, in which plays upon some such name can be detected. But the fact is proved that child-sacrifice, though not belonging to Hebrew religion in the strict sense of the term, was practised in the early days and even in later times in days of darkness and defeat (2 Kings iii. 27). Thus we see that such a story is not fiction in the popular sense of that word, it is a reflection of actual life. And it is also true that God delivered men from such gloomy superstitions through the influence of the particular man who had a clearer vision and a nobler faith. In this sense the story embodies both actual history and religious truth.

Practical Application. The backward man who attempts in our age to imitate the exact form of this sacrifice is rightly judged insane, and thereby society expresses the truth that to cling to crude "superstitions," which have been condemned by the growing light of divine revelation, is a form of insanity. It was such insanity that led a great nation in our own times to worship the crude military ideal, from which the noblest nations of the world were struggling to escape. When the call came to meet the danger thus created, men with sad hearts but with determined purpose gave their first-born that liberty might not be lost, and that the world might be saved. The spirit of the Cross was in such service and sacrifice. The men of faith, in all

[1] By Gunkel, cf. Skinner's *Genesis*. For the substitution of images in the place of living victims, *see* Moore on the Religions of Japan, China and Egypt. I. 109.

ages, have been called "fools" by shallow cynics, but they have always had their own deep spiritual satisfaction. From the deadly discomforts of the trenches, a scholar, with the presentiment of his own fate, could send this noble legacy to his child :—

> "One will call the thing sublime,
> And one decry it in a knowing tone.
> So here where the mad guns curse overhead,
> And tired men sigh with mud for couched floor,
> Know that we fools, now with the foolish dead,
> Died not for Flag, nor King, nor Emperor,
> But for a dream, born in a herdsman's shed,
> And for the secret Scripture of the poor." [1]

Thus in all ages the way of obedience has been the way of sacrifice. God leads us towards reverent kindly forms of service, but the foolish arrogance and blind passions of men have often created situations, from which there was no remission except by the shedding of blood. The story leaves with us its final word which we must still cherish, in spite of all our wild blundering ways. This word has entered into the rich vocabulary of the saints. We must treat it intelligently and not allow it to die. "God will see to it." He will provide. If there is faith and a lofty ideal He will give help in the emergency, and victory when hope has perished. He will not take away sacrifice, but will lift it to ever higher forms. The coarse, brutal features He will cleanse away, and will make it to reflect more perfectly the spirit of the eternal Christ (Heb. x. 9).

[1] Professor Kettle.

VIII. THE STORY OF JACOB

(Selected Passages)

This series of stories is the most ambitious and successful attempt to write a biography of one of the patriarchs, and to present an adequate account of the origin of the Twelve Tribes. As it now stands, it is a compilation of the different documents and contains varied traditions. We come practically to the close of Genesis before Jacob's career is complete. The historians will soon pass from these records of family life to the movement of tribes and clans, that are seeking to live in union and to claim for themselves a home in the land where their fathers had been strangers and sojourners. Within the same space, we learn the origin of the Edomites who were to be their neighbours and enemies. The stories that are gathered round the name of Joseph, Jacob's beloved son, are complete before the aged patriarch passes from the scene. The latter have always been recognized as beautiful and attractive; they will continue to exercise kindly influence, apart from any question of "historicity"; their strength is not in the record of "facts," but in the revelation of *real* life, that is, of the thoughts, ambitions and passions by which men and women are moved.

Many fine meditations and noble sermons have been inspired by the story of Jacob's life or by particular

incidents in it.[1] It has been taken as the story of a man who at the beginning is coarse and greedy, desirous of this world's goods and unscrupulous in gaining them; driving a hard bargain with his brother and treating his God in the same spirit. This kind of life he continues to live in a distant land and shows himself to be as shrewd as his uncle Laban; if, now and then, he is overreached the balance is finally in his favour. When oppressed by the cares and responsibilities of his large family, he becomes more serious and comes to a deeper sense of moral obligation. His danger from his brother Esau, when the guilty past rises up against him, drives him into the mysterious presence of God, where he receives a new name and a new nature. Sorrow still has its work to do, and the loss of Joseph, the threatened loss of Benjamin extorts from him the pitiful cry, "if ye take this one also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Thus his life is purified, his temper mellowed, his experience enriched, he is prepared for and made worthy of a happy ending to his long changeful life. This is a noble picture quite in harmony with the highest Christian teaching as well as with our actual experience of the divine discipline of life. Severe critics concede that the latest compilers may have had a glimmering of these great truths. When the varied elements old and new had finally come together, there was a suggestion of an individual man guided by the God of Israel, defended in the hour of danger, brought through many emergencies to a rich prosperity so that he might become the father of a great race. But detailed study reveals a composite picture of varied elements that have been strangely mingled. Later interpretations, the

[1] *See* F. W. Robertson's Sermon on xxxii. 24 ff.

evidences of thought advancing in refinement and spirituality lie side by side, with ideas and pictures from a rude primitive age.

Though it is only by the exercise of a sympathetic imagination anticipating later teaching that the story can be raised to the high spiritual level just mentioned, it is a rich repository for the student of ancient beliefs and customs. The personification of tribes as individual men and women ; the coining of names supposed to be expressive of their character and destiny ; the power of the aged man, just before his departure, to see into the future and to give a blessing, which is not merely a wish but a real prediction ; the possibility of the poor man paying for his bride by labour, instead of with money or substance ; the intense longing for children and the custom of adoption or motherhood by proxy ; the practice of polygamy and concubinage with its consequent rivalries and division ; the marriage festival of seven days ; the belief in dreams as a source of revelation and sleeping in sacred places to stimulate such dreams ; the setting of boundaries by solemn ceremonies and invoking God's presence as witness and guardian of the treaty—these things are not presented in a formal manner as commands or examples for us but, on every page of an ancient story, they are incidentally suggested as part of "the local colour." Behind many of them are permanent ideas worth preserving in some suitable form.

In Hebrew literature there is strength, soberness, often impressive dignity and wonderful beauty, but we do not expect to find light playful fancy. The question arises, is there not a certain grim humour in the account of Jacob outwitting Esau and getting the better in the contest with Laban, and in Rachel sitting upon her

father's gods? Sacred scripture is not supposed to provide entertainment and much that seemed frivolous may have been cleansed away and forgotten. But if we are to understand the primitive literature, we must try to put ourselves in the place of the original hearers and remember their pride of patriotism, and the fact that they did not judge the actions of their ancestors according to the most refined modern standards. Their belief was that God had loved Jacob and hated Esau, and they were likely to rejoice in "a smart trick" that placed his rival at a disadvantage. The Jew, according to the world's judgment of him, has not lost this gift, and without being uncharitable, we may say that "spoiling the Egyptians" has not been confined to ancient times nor has the Jew had a monopoly of it. The sympathy of the ordinary reader goes out to Esau and makes quick response to his pathetic cry. "Those tears of Esau, the sensuous, wild, impulsive man, almost like the cry of some 'trapped creature,' are among the most pathetic in the Bible." [1] The apologist has to point out that the sensuous, wild, impulsive, careless man makes little contribution to the common life, any more than to his own prosperity, while the smooth, conventional, thrifty man holds society together and makes possible the preservation of resources both material and spiritual.

Again, the story, while it takes a strongly personal form, reflects the character and fortune of two races, or rather two branches of the same race. The Edomites, like the Moabites, belonged to the same Semitic class of settlers in Canaan; they were less powerful than the Moabites but caused considerable trouble, as from their position they threatened the province of Judah.

[1] Davidson quoted by Skinner.

According to the Hebrew tradition the Edomite kingdom was in existence when the tribes of Israel began to come into Judah. The rivalry between the two peoples is seen right through their history and continued down to the latest times. The conviction of the Hebrews that their own religion was superior and their life nobler has been proved to be more than patriotic boasting or poetic exaggeration.

The Patriarchs and the Sanctuaries. It is evident that the Hebrews took a lively interest in the past; memories of the desert days and its simple life continued and manifested themselves in protests against the licentious, luxurious ways of the Canaanites; but if they were to take root in the new land and be really at home there, they must have a past filled with appropriate traditions, rich in poetic, prophetic power. When their own system of thought and religion was fully developed and could stand upon its own history, the priests of a later time might abolish or ignore this past; but in the early centuries men's souls would have been starved without the nourishment drawn from sacred memories. The land into which they came was not an empty unfurnished place, it was a country with strong cities and small kingdoms, many movements of the great world had passed over it, a long history had created a special atmosphere that gave to the ancient religions a local form and colour. The long course of Israel's history is a story of conflict between these two mighty forces, the spirit of the new country that lived in its soil, its hills and trees, its springs and streams, and the spirit of their own religion which craved simplicity, strength and unity. Before they could purify the land they must appropriate and own it; its sacred places were an essential part of its life and history. The linking of the

Hebrew patriarchs with these sanctuaries was a natural process, no story-teller of early times could have sent his heroes wandering through the land without the central fact of worship.[1]

Jacob at Bethel (Gen. xxviii. 10–22; xxxv. 1–8)

We are told that Abram built an altar near Bethel and worshipped Yahweh there, but that is a mere passing notice, Genesis xii. 8; the name of this particular sanctuary is, in these stories, most intimately associated with the name of Jacob. From his experience there, the sanctuary receives its name, and the meaning of the word "Bethel" finds its explanation, when the sacred stone is recognized as the house of God. Referring to Duhm's comment on the passage, Isaiah i. 29 f., Dr. Skinner says: "Duhm's brilliant generalization that Abraham was in tradition associated with sacred trees, Isaac and Ishmael with sacred wells, and Jacob with sacred stones, though not literally accurate, has sufficient truth to be suggestive, and may possibly correspond to some vague impression of the popular mind in Israel." It is certainly true that religion was closely associated with these natural features, for gods and demons were everywhere and heaven was not far away. Perhaps the appreciation of "scenery" shown in modern poetry and art may claim a distant kinship

[1] The process was a long one and because it expressed living forces was complicated. Questions like the following arise and are not easy to answer. "Have we here fragments of a work whose theme was the history of the Yahweh-religion from its commencement with Enosh to its establishment in the leading sanctuaries of Palestine by Abraham and Isaac?" Skinner Gen. xii. 9 ff.

with this early religious feeling manifested in so-called nature-religion.

Into this Israelite story (E) there have been inserted some features from the Judean document (J), including one of the well-known promises that the God of his fathers will give the land upon which Jacob lies to his seed, this seed shall become as the dust of the earth and shall spread widely through the land (*vv.* 13–16). Leaving this to one side, we have a short, simple story how Jacob, when he fled from home came to the place. To the ancients "*the place*" was not merely a locality, it was a sanctuary (xii. 4); that which gave significance and turned mere ground into "a place" was some appearance of the divinity. Jacob, overtaken by the sunset, takes one of the stones for a pillow and lies down. The sacred power of the place makes itself felt in the wonderful dream that comes to him; the rocks and pillars on the hill-side are transformed into a wonderful staircase on which the angels of God pass between earth and heaven. When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, he said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Then Jacob set up the stone that had been his pillow as a sacred pillar and anointed it with oil, and made a vow that if God caused him to prosper he would pay the tenth in token of gratitude. Thus the name of Bethel—"House of God"—is explained and the origin of the title.[1]

We know that the anointing of sacred stones was common in ancient times, though we cannot find precisely what suggested the beautiful symbol of the stairway between earth and heaven. It is interesting to

[1] "This and Amos iv. are the only pre-Deuteronomic references to the tithe (cf. xiv. 20)." Skinner.

note how in the history of mankind the rude stone may be the dwelling-place of a god, how it becomes later a pillar—a symbol of his presence, an adornment of the sanctuary, how art and religion became in a measure reconciled, so that the pillar may be carved and on the same site a temple built. Later the prophet may stand at the king's sanctuary, the king's house demanding a purer worship and a nobler faith (Amos vii. 13). Thus, while the modest chapel of a strict sect bears the name "Bethel," the great cathedrals, embodying the highest architectural achievement of the latest age, may trace their ancestry back to great stones which were the homes and symbols of the earliest gods. More important to us than the pillar or any symbol is the religious feeling that is revealed, the recognition that there is communication between earth and heaven. This feeling that the presence of God may come upon us unawares, and suddenly remind us that there is something sacred in life, this fear in the presence of the divine may rise slowly into real reverence and intelligent worship. "Reverence is essential, and where there is reverence I am not disposed to quarrel with my brother about ritual" (Gladstone). Certainly we are not going to quarrel with the saints of bygone days; it will be well if we can express the same poetic feeling and religious experience in nobler forms. In xxxv. we are told that Jacob, on his return, came again to Bethel, by God's command, to fulfil his vow, that solemn preparation was made for this by burying at Shechem the family gods, strange gods and ornaments that had been used for heathenish purposes (cf. Josh. xxiv. 23–25). It was not seemly to take such things, on their pilgrimage, to a place sacred to the God of Israel. There may lie behind this some recollection of a struggle and conquest

of foreign gods ; in the conflict with idolatry there was both slow upward movement as well as violent battles, great crises and solemn renunciations. The name "God of Bethel" stood at one time for the highest that had been attained and it still lives in our religious vocabulary reminding us that we worship the "God of our fathers," and that such worship binds into one great family the long succession of pious souls.

Jacob at Peniel, Genesis xxxii.

"The complexion of this story was peculiarly Jewish. It contains three points that are specially interesting to every Jew in a national point of view. It explained to him why he was called Israelite. It traces the origin of his own name to a distant ancestor, who had signally exhibited religious strength, and been, in the language of those times, a wrestler with God, from whence he had obtained the name Israel. It casts much deep and curious interest round an otherwise insignificant Peniel, where this transaction had taken place, and which derived its name from it, Peniel, the face of God, and, besides it explained the origin of a curious custom, which might seem a superstitious one, of not suffering a particular muscle to be eaten, and regarding it with a kind of religious awe, as the part in which Jacob was said by tradition to have been injured, by the earnest tension of his frame during the struggle. So far all is Jewish, narrow, merely of local interest. Besides this, much of the story is evidently mythical."[1] These words form the introduction to a sermon preached more than seventy years ago by one of the ablest expositors of the last century. Upon this incident in the life of Jacob, he gave an interesting, stimulating dis-

[1] F. W. Robertson.

course, on " The Nameless Secret of Existence " ; and the revelation of that secret to the soul. Without the advantage of critical analysis, the fine instinct, the sympathetic insight of a Christian scholar produced a sermon which is fresh and suggestive after the lapse of all these years, a pretty severe test for any sermon.

In any case, the examination of minute points of criticism is unfit for public discussion, and they are often so difficult and even unsolvable, that they dishearten the student who wishes to turn scholarship to practical service. Critics tell us that there is a lack of smoothness in the story that indicates a blending of two strains though they differ as to the exact division ; and we are face to face with a situation that is common, namely, the ancient editor, without completely passing the material through his own mind, so as to produce a perfect fusion, has yet left a very difficult task to those who would disentangle the threads. We are told that Jacob took his wives and children over the stream ; then it is added that he sent them over, and did not himself pass over until the next morning (31). Jacob's thigh was strained by a blow, and by chance in the wrestling ; the giving of a new name is in itself a blessing and so the phrase " he blessed him there " is a repetition ; according to one statement Jacob conquered, according to the other he barely escaped with his life ; in 25 the narrator speaks, in 27, God. As we review this kind of thing the question arises, is not this to consider too curiously ? Perhaps it is not well to despise such special studies though we must keep our minds free and flexible after these so-called " pedantic " exercises.

As a result of this strange experience, it is claimed that Jacob saw God face to face, a privilege granted

also to the great leader Moses (Exod. xxxiii. 11; Deut. xxxiv. 10). Thus the name of the place is Peniel, "the face of God," but the exact site is not known. The food taboo derived from the story is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament, and it is thought that the prohibition in the Mishna rests on this passage, traces of it are said to be found in ancient Arabia, and other parallels have been cited from primitive peoples. Then the change of name indicating a change of fortune is a constant feature of such stories. Israel, probably meaning "God strives," is here explained as one who "contends with or against God." It is an ancient name of some of the tribes, found on an Egyptian inscription (about 1230 B.C.); it has been suggested that it was originally a war-cry that has passed into a proper name, the name of a proud people, who claimed that they could prevail with God and conquer men (cf. xxxv. 10).[1]

All this merely clears the ground and brings us face to face with the central question, the origin and meaning of the story. As a separate story there is in it a strange mysterious power, and its present position was well chosen. As it stands there, it suggests the power of the past to rise up in the great crises of life. When Jacob left the land of his birth, it was to flee from the

[1] On the sentence in the Egyptian inscription "Ysiraal is desolated, its seed (or fruit) is not": *see* Prof. Kennett's interesting suggestion quoted by McNeile (Exod. cix.): "that the inscription may record the substance of a despatch from an official in Palestine, who would presumably write in a Semitic language. If so, the people indicated might not be Israel but the natives of Yizre'e'l (Jezriel), in which case the passage contains a play on the word *zera'* ('seed'). It may be noted that 'Israel' resembled 'Jezrel' in sound closely enough for Hosea (i. 4 f.) to play on the two names."

anger of a brother whom he had wronged; when he came back, after long years of separation, he learned that the past is not dead, the grim ghost of it comes upon him in the hour of weakness. That also is a fact of experience whether it was in the mind of the compiler or not. The judgment of careful students, in the light of recent research, justifies the statement of the distinguished preacher, "much of the story is evidently mythical." Many stories of conflicts between gods and men have been gathered, showing how large a part such ideas have played in the thoughts of men, who without the resources of modern science were compelled to wrestle with the mighty mysterious forces of nature. The turbulent stream was a god who resented interference and had to be propitiated, conquered or cheated. Such gods, like the ghosts of later times, exercised their full power during the witching hours of night, and had to flee when the greater god, the glorious sun, began to manifest his claims to rule the day. Such conceptions are far away from the minds of those who believe in one God, and one "reign of law," though there are still many millions of men and women who live in this atmosphere of a world peopled by gods and demons. Thus the first stage in its history is that of a picturesque primitive story connected with an ancient god of the river or of the ford. Then, when it comes into the realm of Hebrew history, it is used to explain the name of a sanctuary and perhaps of some feature of its ritual. The story-tellers, J and E, used it to set Jacob in a situation demanding heroic strength and determination. So as to give the origin of the name "Israel," Jacob prevails with the national God and comes from the conflict with a new name that shall inspire confidence but with a memorial that will keep pride in check.

They have softened the story but the original " anthropomorphism " is still there.

It is pointed out that very early the story began to be interpreted in a more refined spiritual manner, as in Hosea xii. 4, 5, where Jacob wrestles with *the angel*, and prevails by *the power of prayer*. " In the womb, he took his brother by the heel ; and in the strength (of his manhood) he strove with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed ; he wept and made supplication unto him, etc." Thus does the prophet base a short sermon on the early story. And from that time spiritually minded men have treated it as an allegory of the soul's struggle in importunate prayer ; the Christian poet sets the Christ in the place of the primitive storm-god. Charles Wesley's poem will live and speak to the souls of men, even if it has been called " a mystical rhapsody, full of colour and imagination," rather than a hymn.

v. 1. Come, O Thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold but cannot see ;
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee ;
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

v. 5. Yield to me now, for I am weak,
But confident in self-despair ;
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak ;
Be conquered by my instant prayer !
Speak, or Thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me, if Thy name is Love ?

The message that the name of the ghostly visitor could be love or that this great word must be the final solution of life's mystery is " a gospel " that was still in the dim and distant future. What is the use of

speaking of " progressive revelation " and " the fulness of the times " unless we fill these phrases with living content, and realize the long, slow path along which men had to be led before they could see " the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ " (2 Cor. iv. 6) ? " No more boldly anthropomorphic narrative is found in Genesis ; and unless we shut our eyes to some of its salient features, we must resign the attempt to translate it wholly into terms of religious experience " (Skinner). That certainly must be true of much primitive material but the efforts made in the direction of such translation show the living principle of a great faith which is ever seeking to lift the spiritual life from lower to higher levels. " If we yield to the impression which the primitive narrative makes upon one who is trained in history, and also hold the allegorical interpretation by which the Christian community has appropriated it and which has grown into all our hearts, we cannot sufficiently admire the strength of the religion which turns foreign material to its own use, gives a new sense to primitive things, and changes dross into gold " (Gunkel).

One does not expect or desire that the preacher can profitably handle the history of primitive religion and the problems of " folk-lore " in the pulpit, but men of poetic instinct will keep alive the spirit of sympathy with our distant ancestors, who in their own way wrestled with the mystery of life. The thing that cannot be perfectly " translated " may, even in our larger world, have a symbolic power. This " modern " world with its wonderful mechanism, with things and forces classified and labelled, sometimes becomes oppressive, so that we long for the romance and fairyland of earlier days. The background of mystery is however still

here; the soul has its hours of darkness, its unsolved problems, its hunger for rest and longing for the supreme blessing. No abstract statement can fully satisfy its needs; the poetic story will always have its mission. Sometimes we are tempted to make the confession—

"Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

IX. MOSES, OR THE GLORY OF BEGINNINGS

(Stories of Various Dates)

For almost two thousand years Moses was regarded as the author of the first five books of the Bible; he was supposed to have written the history of his ancestors and of the pre-Israelite world, as it appears in Genesis; he is the chief figure in the three following books, and Deuteronomy, in the main, consists of speeches and laws which he is supposed to have delivered at the end of the wilderness period. When, by a slow process of critical investigation, it was shown that this great and varied literature was a growth of centuries, and implied a long historical and religious movement, and that it was doubtful whether any of it could be definitely related to the life of Moses, it seemed as if this heroic personality would disappear from the stage on which he had been the most prominent figure. Some scholars, indeed, were content to give to David the position not only of founder of the monarchy, but of the first great missionary of the Yahweh religion.[1] When we recognize that the elaborate ritual, which takes up so much space in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, belongs, *in its completed codified form*, to a late period; that Deuteronomy arises seven or eight centuries after the time

[1] See Jordan, *Biblical Criticism and Modern Thought*, p. 135.

of Moses, and rests upon the Book of the Covenant (Exod. xx. 22–xxiii. 33), and that the latter is not a wilderness code but implies life on the soil of Palestine; that the "Ten Words" (Exod. xx. 1–21), *may* be a later prophetic summary of the law, then the question arises, What is the real position of Moses in Hebrew history? Is he merely a traditional name around whom wonderful legends have gathered, but whose actual life is lost in the mists of a remote past?

When we come, at first, to consider the origin of the Hebrew people, and inquire concerning their life before they came into Palestine, things do not become much clearer. We no longer view the beginnings of a nation as a descent from one man or family, but rather as a combination of clans and tribes. We know that these tribes began to come into Canaan soon after 1450 B.C.; and that the entrance and settlement was a long, slow process, unlike the ideal picture of the book of Joshua. All that Egyptian history tells us about these movements is that the supremacy of that country in Palestine was breaking down, and that the philosophic emperor of the time could give no help against the invaders. The most careful critics concede that some Hebrew clans were living on the border of Egypt, and that when attempts were made to force them into regular labour they would rebel and attempt to make their escape to the freer life of the desert.[1] Such a movement could not be accomplished without a leader, and a sanctuary would surely play its part. (Num. xx. 1). That the incoming tribes met with hindrances from Amalekites, Edomites and Moabites is also in the realm of actual history. That the name of the great

[1] Moore, Peters, etc.

leader who did the pioneer work and did not himself enter the land of promise should be lost does not seem credible, "for a fable to become legendary and reappear in the domain of history, as a triple tradition, would be a difficult thing to understand" (Westphal). Though the circumstances were not favourable to the creation and preservation of contemporary written records, the memory of men would certainly be tenacious with regard to the birth-hour of their nation; later, when such memories could find free expression in popular stories, these would take much of their colour from the time of their origin. Such richness and variety of material shows the strength and vitality of the conviction that "the Exodus" was the time when the nation and the religion were born. These stories, carefully studied and sifted, yield a rich reward to the student of history and literature, and should not be neglected altogether by the expositor.[1]

Something was done then, which, while it had to be continued, preserved and expanded, could only have one beginning, viz. the founding of a nation and a religion. Connected with the great name of Moses there are things and thoughts which take us back to primitive life before his time; and others which developed in later ages; but from these we can separate his peculiar work. He united certain tribes in the worship of one God, "Yahweh"; simple as the statement may seem to us, it was a great thing, a thing of everlasting significance for the life of Israel and of the world. This does not mean that its full significance was seen all at once, or that "superstitions" inconsistent with it were cleared away, at one

[1] *See* Bacon's *Triple Tradition of The Exodus*.

stroke. But it does mean that a religious principle was introduced into the life of the people, who fought under this banner, that would prove its persistence, and its power, in many ways, to separate "the precious from the vile." To get at the heart of "the miracle" may be difficult, but to recognize the fact that it was there is forced upon us by a reasonable interpretation of the facts. This religion possessed, in early days, spiritual elements whose full powers were gradually and clearly manifested. Such a union of men for a common purpose could arise only under religious influence, and in this case that influence could only work through the play of a great personality. We do not measure a seed by its size or colour, but by the fruit that comes from it, when brought into real contact with suitable soil.

After all the discussions concerning Babylon and Egypt we are convinced that the founder of the Hebrew religion did not "import" or "borrow" it from either of these sources; what he gave was not a finished product in doctrine and ritual but an impulse, something less definite in outline, but more living in spirit. It is the power and privilege of life to draw nutriment from foreign sources and turn it to its own purposes. The "monotheism" that the Hebrew people gave to the world could not have been brought from anywhere in the age of Moses, for the good reason that it did not exist anywhere. The view that Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians belongs to a later time, and tends to pass away as the light of history is thrown on the situation. Moses, studying the speculations and mysteries of Egyptian priests, and adapting them to his rude simple followers, is a fanciful picture. "In the present state of investi-

gation a connexion of the Mosaic founding of religion with the monotheistic reform of the "heretic" Amenhophis IV might be most likely to be worthy of discussion. This king (about 1350 B.C.) attempted to abolish the worship of all gods in favour of the sun-god whom he named Atum. But his work passed away with his death, and a hundred years later, at the time of Moses, was quite forgotten" (H. Gressmann).[1] This author represents modern critical opinion, when he rejects all attempts to derive the Mosaic religion from the Egyptian, because this view finds no support in Hebrew tradition, which points rather to a connexion with the Midianites, and for the following reason: "For the Egyptian religion three things are characteristic: first, the polytheism, which only for a few years and only in court circles was interrupted by the reform of Amenhophis IV. But the Israelite religion since the time of Moses knew only one God of Israel. Second, the representation of the gods with the heads of animals while the rest is in human form. But the Israelite religion was averse to images. Since the time of Moses there never was an image of Yahweh; images of foreign gods may in various forms have been introduced, but the mixing of man and animal was always limited to Egypt. Then the death-cult, which can be noted as the essential feature of Egyptian religion, because it took captive the whole religious interest of Egypt. The Israelite religion troubled itself very little about death."

We realize now, more fully than ever before, that what we call natural causes or economic forces played a real part in the movements and migrations of peoples;

[1] On this "monotheism" *see* Breasted's *Development*, etc., and Peters' *Bible and Spade*, p. 28.

men were driven by hunger or lack of fruitful land to seek new homes. But we must not forget that in ancient times, when the world was small and movement into strange lands difficult and dangerous, and individual travel almost impossible, men must move in masses and were dependent upon capable leadership. The leader must combine in himself in an elementary form the qualities of soldier, priest and prophet. We need not use the word king, as kingship was a difficult thing to establish in Israel; and some of the stories in the life of Moses, after allowance has been made for later accretions, suggest that from the earliest times the Israelites were "a stiff-necked people" who did not relish submission to an "autocrat." As we may see in the book of Judges and the stories of the origin of the kingdom when the Israelites did unite, it was under external pressure, as a means of saving themselves from destruction. History has many instances of the quick gathering of clans and their quick dispersion after discouragement and defeat. The man who gathered the Hebrews together and kept them to their purpose on the borders of the new land must have been a man of strong character, able to enlist the highest power, the influence of religion, able also to administer justice in simple forms, to speak inspiring words, as well as to show bravery in battle. Such a man was Moses, whom we may see by the power of imagination, after cold critical processes have cut away so much that seemed to belong to him. When the later legislation, with its different parts, has been placed in its historical setting and later elements in the varied stories are recognized, there is still sufficient to show how earnest men of early times thought of the great leader; we have no

actual portrait but we have a composite picture, on the lines indicated above. Patriots and prophets were stimulated by the belief that they were called to carry on the work to which he had consecrated his life. They desired for the satisfaction of intellectual and spiritual needs to perpetuate the memory of one who had prepared the way and seen great things by the eye of faith, before he passed to his unknown grave. The result is the picture of a great leader, called from his birth, preserved and prepared for his great work, showing in his actions pride of race and sympathy for the oppressed. He stands in a hostile world ; he is eager to help a people who are lacking in wholesome ambition and noble faith. The power of his God is great, kings and magicians are only slight obstacles to the fulfilment of His purposes. The greater problem is to inspire the people with the faith that sacrifices the present for the future, that prizes liberty more than ease, that refuses to turn back when the way seems to be blocked. Moses meets the common fate of all great leaders, whose complete devotion to a great cause is so often rewarded by misinterpretation and lack of loyalty in the critical hours. He has become, through these stories, a conspicuous and everlasting type of the pioneer, the man who blazes the path along which others may travel, of the builder who laid strong foundations on which the temple of truth has been built. Men of later ages, inspired by the example thus set before them, have preferred realities to shams and " endured as seeing the invisible."

From this mass of varied material we touch only three points.

(1) The Burning Bush (Exod. iii. 2–6 J)

For analysis of these chapters, rendered so difficult by the blending of different documents and variety of supplements, the student may consult the commentaries; this brief statement from one of the early narratives leads us to consider the call of Moses. It expresses the belief that, in a different form but in the same spirit, as in Isaiah or Jeremiah, Moses took up his life work as the result of a divine revelation. He went out one day to his common work, and he came upon a sacred place and heard the voice of God. As in the case of Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 11), he came to a place and he found unexpectedly that it was a sacred place, that it must be approached with reverence, and that there a divine oracle might be secured (cf. Josh. v. 15). As the Hebrew names for Sinai and the "thorn-bush" are similar, it is possible that there is a play upon the sounds; the only other place where this "bush" is referred to is in the poem Dueteronomy xxxiii. 16: "And the good will of him that dwelt in the bush."[1] It is evidently an allusion to this story. There is a certain indefiniteness about the place, but there is surely some connexion between it and the fiery manifestations that attended the appearance of God to the early Israelites. In a more subdued manner and in a gentler tone the revelation came to Moses. The scene of the story is uncertain, exactly what it was

[1] It has been suggested, on account of the word "dwell" that Sinai rather than "bush" be read. "It is probable, however, that a reference to one who dwelt in the thorn-bush meant more to the ancient Israelite than we can now understand; it is only faint reminiscences of these primitive beliefs that now remain in poetic form" (Jordan, *Deuteronomy*).

that caused the appearance we cannot tell; if we could "rationalize" it we might not be richer, we might even be poorer, if we lost the imagination that finds "sermons in stones, tongues in trees, and books in the running brooks." The burning bush has been used as the symbol of "Israel's sons like glowing brands, toss'd wildly o'er a thousand lands, for twice a thousand years" (Keble). And it has been claimed as the motto of a persecuted Church, "nec tamen consumebatur." That is the later application of a noble symbol to the experience of those who suffer for their conviction. But the central thought seems to be that Moses found God at a sacred place; he saw a strange sight; he was moved by curiosity and then restrained by fear; the call that came to him in that solemn hour meant consecration and service. This fact found in later times a larger and richer interpretation; and it is still a central fact of religious experience. We may rejoice to find God in the regular round of life, so that we do not feel the need of pilgrimages to sacred places; we may lay less stress on special sanctuaries than the saints of other religions, but we still need the faith that "the God of our fathers" comes in real vision to the soul, assigns to men great tasks and gives strength for their performance.

(2) The New Name (Exod. iii. 13–15 E; vi. 2–4 P)

Here are two writers who treat the name of Israel's God as a revelation to Moses; as we have seen, there is another writer (J) who not only uses the name "Yahweh" freely in Genesis, but also mentions a time when it began to be used (Gen. iv. 26). This name is represented in the A.V. by the Lord following

the Greek *Kurios* and Latin *Dominus*. The form "Jehovah," which has been in use for the past four centuries, is not a real Hebrew word but results from combining the vowels of one word with the consonants of another. It is highly probable that the original form of the name was Yahweh or Yahu ; in the early days it was a watchword and a battle-cry. For some centuries it was used freely and reverently, and was combined with the names of men. When the religion was losing something of its primitive simplicity and reality its use began to be avoided (Lev. xxiv. 11) ; and later from a severe interpretation of Exodus xx. 9, devout men feared to pronounce it ; then the word "Lord" (Adonai) was read in its place. That is the priestly and scribal history of "The Name" ; its theological or prophetic history is richer, is, in fact, the story of the great movement by which the Yahweh of Moses becomes Lord of the world.

According to the Priestly writer (Exod. vi. 2–4), there were stages in the progress of revelation represented by the different divine names ; Elohim (god or gods), at the beginning ; El-Shaddai (God Almighty), made known to Abraham ; Yahweh, revealed to Moses. There is here the idea of progress, even if somewhat mechanically expressed. Scholars have spent much time and ingenuity on the question of the origin and precise meaning of these three names but with slight success. The origin of such names always goes back to time that is both distant and dim. As to the most important of the three, "the sacred Name," it probably existed much earlier, because great movements do not necessarily invent new names, in that respect the J document is right, but the statement of E and P seems to be reliable that *it came effectively*

into Hebrew life and history at the time of Moses. The Hebrews whom we meet first in Palestine fight under the banner of Yahweh, the God of their fathers (Judges v.).

To the ancients *the name* was a living mysterious power, those who knew the name of a god could call for and possibly constrain his help (Gen. xxxii. 27). The name revealed secrets, summed up knowledge, represented the nature, gave an image of the character. If Moses is to appeal to the people, win their confidence and inspire their courage, he must speak to them in the *name* of a god (iii. 13). It is not merely the name that is given here, but the earliest theological explanation of it; the name comes from the time of Moses, the reflection that explains it belongs to a later time. "I am what I am" or "I will be what I will be."[1] What was meant exactly by this apparently simple phrase is not quite clear; though this explanation of "the Name" is a product of early theological thought we cannot attach to it the abstract ideas of existence and eternity which were worked out by later scholastic philosophy. "Such a development was already laid, as a seed in the original meaning of the story, which no longer understood the concrete name and gave it an abstract sense" (Gressmann). So this name, Yahweh, in its history becomes a symbol of the whole religious movement; it comes out of the obscure place of Midian or Sinai; it is a personal name of a national god, the god of fire and battle; but it has within it the mysterious seed of nobler things; these are made clear by prophets and poets; at last the time comes when even men, who are not free from nationalism, turn from it through a reverence, which may be

[1] *See* R.V.

in part a premonition that the time is coming when a Hebrew national name can no longer be used to represent the Lord of the world.

It is well to remember that these three facts are illustrated in the larger and later history of the world; (1) the obscure origin of the name for God, (2) the changes in the history of such names, and (3) the influence of the belief in *one* God. Turning to a dictionary (*The Century*) we find these words, "Popular etymology has long derived God from good; but the comparison of these forms shows this to be an error. Moreover the notion of goodness is not conspicuous in the heathen conception of deity, and in good itself the ethical sense is comparatively late." It is claimed that the name God comes from Guadin, the original form of Odin; and that often names that were once honoured, as "Baga," have become terms of contempt, in this case "Bogie." "Such is the irony of fate towards a deposed deity. The German name for idol, *Abgott*, that is, ex-god or dethroned god, sums up in a single etymology the havoc wrought by monotheism among the ancient symbols of deity. In the hospitable Pantheon of the Greeks and Romans a niche was always in readiness for every new divinity who could produce respectable credentials, but the triumph of monotheism converted the stately mansion into a Pandemonium peopled with fiends. To the monotheist an ex-god was simply a devilish deceiver of mankind whom the true God had succeeded in vanquishing, and thus the word Demon, which to the ancients meant a divine or semi-divine being, came to be applied to fiends exclusively" (J. Fiske, *Myths and Myth Makers*, p. 104).

(3) Moses the Prophet

"To Moses was accorded a plainer knowledge of the divine, and more constant communion with God, than to any of the other prophets of the Old Testament."[1] We cannot to-day accept literally this statement; but we believe that the great leader began the prophetic movement which was destined to lift the Hebrew religion out of its Semitic background, and gave it a distinctive moral character. The statement just quoted, taken absolutely, would mean that there was no real advance. It is based, of course, upon the view that the Pentateuch comes from his pen. The position now generally held is that *the stories*, gathered round his wilderness career, while reflecting the difficulties which any real leader must meet in a really great political movement, show, at the same time, the later conflicts between the natural conditions and the higher religious impulse. It was in Canaan that the severest battles against idolatry were fought; the stern strong men from the desert were in danger of being seduced by the sensuous ritual and the sensual worship of the Canaanite religion. This was a long struggle; it is mirrored in such stories as that of "the golden calf" and similar narratives (Exod. xxxii). Here are set forth in forms that appealed to the people more powerfully than a bare decree or a formal creed, the principles that are involved in this age-long battle. (1) The difficulty of preserving among the common people the purity and simplicity of the religion. (2) The tendency towards deterioration when the influence of a great personality is withdrawn. (3) The pure patriotism and fervent zeal of a great

[1] Article in Schaff-Herzog, 1894.

prophet, who is willing to have his name blotted from the book of life, if Yahweh will forgive the nation's sin and preserve *its* life. (4) The intense hatred of idolatry, on account of its degrading influence, is revealed in the inflexible judgment, " Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." (5) And yet, through the dark clouds some rays of light begin to shine, and the story, in its various moods, shows not simply a patient prophet who pleads for mercy, but also a God " slow to anger and plenteous in mercy," though it is made clear that mercy cannot be completely divorced from justice (Num. xiv. 18).

X. A STRIKING SERMON

Joshua vii. (J and E)

Two narratives of the same event have been blended, and scholars think that it is possible to separate them; though the differences are not as glaring as in some other cases. The stories are similar in substance and spirit; the editor has succeeded in preserving the best from both sources. Such repetitions as "let not all the people go up," "make not all the people to toil thither" (verse 3); "and smote of them about thirty and six men," "and smote them at the going down" (verse 5); "they have even taken of the devoted thing"; "they have also stolen, and dissembled" (verse 11); "and all Israel stoned him with stones," "and they burned them with fire, and stoned them with stones" (verse 25). These repetitions are not according to the type of the best Hebrew story (cf. Gen. xxii. 1–14). Note also the two different names, Amorites (E), Canaanites (J), also the explanation of the origin of a particular cairn, and of the name of a valley. The wedge of gold may be a later addition; but these examples are sufficient to show what the critical miscroscope reveals, and these fine points do not affect the lessons of the story.

In both stories there is the play upon the sounds Achan and Achar, and an explanation of the origin of the name of the valley. The valley of Troubling or

Misfortune was connected with the shameful defeat at Ai and the sin of Achan which was the cause of this disaster. Hosea (ii. 15), uses the name in a gracious promise and is followed in the same spirit by a later writer (Isa. lxv. 10). It has been suggested that the cairn, the "great heap of stones, unto this day," was at one time an honourable grave, when the Arab custom prevailed of raising a heap over the grave, as a memorial; and when that usage had passed away, it was interpreted as the grave of one who had been stoned for breaking the law (Gressmann). Stones were thrown at a man or cast over his grave as a sign that he was cut off from all fellowship with the community. The fiery punishment, added by a later copyist to express his abhorrence of Achan's sin, was prescribed only for a specially detestable deed (Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9).

The story teaches the lesson that is so often repeated in the Old Testament, viz. that sorrow comes through sin, that the weakness that ends in failure and defeat is caused by rejection of the divine commands. If the God of Israel goes not forth with the army, the reason must be found in some act of disloyalty by the community or one of its members. All may be involved in the sin of the guilty one, until it is by an approved method thoroughly purged away. The intercession of the leader (verse 6), and his appeals to the honour of the divine name which will be disgraced in the eyes of the world by failure to support his people; this motive also recurs frequently in the life of Moses. The feature that gives special strength to this story is the conflict of two forces; the power of covetousness in the soul of a man, and the awful demands of "the ban." It is out of such conflicts that the real tragedies of life arise.

In recent times, the saying that "war is hell" has received fuller confirmation and illustration. In ancient times the usages of war were coarse and brutal; in the heat of the conflict there was seldom any touch of pity or chivalry. The prophet Amos is a pioneer when he speaks, in such clear strong tones, in denunciation of "frightfulness" (ch. i.). The *herem* or ban was originally a war custom, and its exercise consisted in "devoting" the enemy and all his belongings to destruction (cf. 1 Sam. xv.). It was an ancient Semitic custom, and in Israel this homage was demanded for and paid to Yahweh, as the war-god, the leader and deliverer of His people. "The religious element is found in the complete surrender of any profit from the victory; and this renunciation is an expression of gratitude for the fact that the war-god has delivered the enemy, who is his enemy also, and all his substance into the hands of the conqueror." [1]

The earlier practice seems to have required the destruction of all property and every living creature in the conquered city; but later it was modified and made much milder. Progress in this direction has always been slow; it is clear that to soften cruel customs is not easy, when once they have been thoroughly saturated with religious feeling and linked with religious motives.

Special danger lurked in the symbols, used in the service of another god. "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not covet the silver or gold that is on them lest thou be snared therein, etc." (Deut. vii. 2, 5). "The core or frame-work of the image is made of wood and then covered with silver or gold (cf. Isa. xxx. 22; xl. 19). Hence it

[1] Kautzsch, *H.D.B.*

could be burnt. Thus precious metals thus used have become defiled by contact with the idol by their employment in the service of a foreign god. Therefore anyone who through greed takes them into his possession shares their defilement and brings upon himself the severe judgment of Yahweh. The story of Achan should be read as a comment on this prohibition. To the people of those days, there was an actual magical or demonic power in the metal that had been in close contact with the idolatrous worship; it belonged to a foreign sphere, whoever touched it was rendered unclean and liable to Yahweh's fierce anger."[1] It is in this atmosphere and in the light of these facts that the story should be read. Then, we can realize that covetousness is reckoned a powerful lust, which can urge a man to gratify his personal desires at the risk of bringing upon himself and his family a terrible curse (Col. iii. 5). That the whole family should be destroyed is explained by the fact that "the solidarity" of the family and tribe was a central thought that ruled society. In the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel men began to separate the individual from the tribe, and even from the family; justice then demanded that a man should suffer for his own sins alone, and not for those of his relatives or companions. This story, when carefully examined, may awaken our curiosity as to ancient ideas and customs; but these, interesting as they are, cannot divert attention from the warning against the sin of covetousness, which stands out so boldly. Achan would make personal profit out of that which belonged to God, and which had cost the blood of his fellow-tribesmen; so he and all his family perished, the name only remained as a

[1] Jordan's *Deuteronomy* vii. 25.

curse and a reproach. Men now may smile at the simplicity of the old story, but if they carry the spirit of Achan into the pursuits of war and peace they too may find that the old sanctions are symbols of terrible realities.

XI. SONG AND STORY

Judges iv., v.

This is a peculiar book full of interest for those who study the history of Israel's religion but not specially attractive to those who seek simply the stimulus of their own religious feeling. We are told that the analysis of it is simple, and certainly there is a large agreement among scholars as to the general structure of the book, and as to the character of its contents. It is the only link that we possess between the dim Mosaic period and the clearer light of history that comes with the rise of the kingdom. The problems of the relation of this history to that contained in the beginning of 1 Samuel and of the various forms through which this book has passed are not easy of solution. It is probable that the first introduction i.–ii. 5, and the appendix xvii.–xxi. were added later; the body of the book is called "the Deuteronomic Book of Judges." The section i.–ii. 5, which, as the book now stands, we have called the first introduction, is a fragment from an ancient and valuable source; it shows that the conquest of the country was not sudden and complete, but that the Hebrews had a long struggle to secure their hold upon the land. This is regarded by the editor as failure through disobedience to their God, but however it is interpreted it represents the actual situation in those early days. The two stories at the

end of the present book (xvii.–xxi.) are primitive in their nature, though the last one has suffered severe changes; they do not belong to the original scheme of the book, they are not related to the conflicts between the Hebrews and the Canaanites. They certainly belong to the rude days when men attempted to do what was right in their own eyes. The author of this Deuteronomic book (ii. 6–xvi. 31) gives in *his* introduction what has been called, in a rather pretentious title, his "philosophy of history," i.e. he treats it as a regular recurrence of apostasy, disaster, repentance and deliverance. The deliverance and restoration was in each case wrought by a hero or judge raised up by God for the purpose. This view of the punishment of national sins by a righteous god is believed to rest upon the teaching of the great prophets which became part of the theology of the later days; here it assumes a somewhat mechanical form and is used as a framework into which are fitted traditions concerning the history and the heroes of the olden time. This primitive material was taken from ancient written sources. The author has preserved the old stories though there is much in them that must have been disagreeable to his theology and distasteful to his religious feeling. Among these we find the story of the great battle and the triumphal song.

The historical records of this period are scanty; we know that the Hebrews had to fight their way into Canaan and that it took them long to secure a firm foothold and build up a real kingdom. When the Hebrews had secured a partial settlement in the land, the Canaanites were still strong in the fortified cities, and on the plain of Jezreel they could use their war-chariots. Not until the time of David was Jerusalem

and the region round it conquered. There were no doubt periods of rest and a certain amount of contact and commerce with the original inhabitants which affected both the economic and religious life of the Hebrews. There was no "King of Canaan," but the different petty kings could combine in case of need. When the Hebrews were weak and divided the Canaanites were on the alert and prepared to take full advantage of the situation. Unless they were to be completely crushed there must be a revival of the religious spirit, the only force that could inspire any measure of unity and of warlike enthusiasm. The call in this case came through a woman, Deborah, who has given her name to the poem, and whom some scholars have regarded as its author. The downtrodden poorly equipped Hebrews rose against the oppressors and a decisive victory was achieved. Such events leave their mark on the national memory, and though the time was not favourable for systematic records, it was bound to bring forth song or story which men would not willingly allow to die. "But the Hebrew poet could not tell of such deeds in bare prose. The recollection of that eventful day stirred him to praise Jehovah and recount the victory in passionate song. Thus we have preserved to us not only the finest ode in Hebrew literature, but also the most venerable authority for a page in the history of ancient Israel."[1] That is the judgment of competent critics, though there are some who have denied both its beauty and its antiquity. Into textual questions we cannot enter, but even from a translation of a text that has suffered severely "the impression of reality" can be gained.[2] Dr. Moore's

[1] S. A. Cook.

[2] *See* A. R. Gordon, *The Poets of the Old Testament*.

wise words on this point bear so closely on our subject that we cannot refrain from quoting them. "The inference from the impression of reality to the contemporary origin of the historical truth of a narrative is not stringent. It is the pre-eminent gift of the poet to *create* this impression even when the story conflicts with our knowledge; think of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare. But the objective character of the art which is capable of producing such an illusion is not easily exemplified among Semitic poets. It is a simpler and more probable explanation in the present case, that the poem was made by one under the immediate inspiration of the events, than that it is a supreme work of the creative imagination."

We know from the historical psalms that written history could be changed by poets into song for the purpose of worship, but here the case is different, the song is earlier, the prose narrative represents a separate tradition. This is a war-song, not a theological poem, as for example Ps. cxxxvii., in fact while there is no explicit theology its inspiration is religious and it shows that the bond of unity in critical times was the recognition of the *one* God. It opens as a hymn of victory which is a hymn of praise to Yahweh. A poem is not primarily an historical record, but incidentally it gives valuable information concerning the condition of the country, the relation of the tribes, and reveals that union of piety and patriotism which was to be the key-note of Hebrew life during succeeding ages. It is a real human song, the exploits of heroes are mentioned, praise and blame are apportioned to the different clans, but the secret of success is the coming of "the God of Israel" to the help of His people.

O Yahweh when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom
The earth quaked, the heavens swayed,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
The mountains shook at the presence of Yahweh.

The appearance of their God from his ancient dwelling-place is the herald of the storm and the promise of success; through the manifestation of Israel's God, with the co-operation of nature, comes the crushing defeat of the enemy.

From heaven fought the stars,
They fought in their paths against Sisera,
The river Kishon swept them away.

Between these there are vivid descriptions of the depressed condition of the Israelites, their lack of arms and still worse their lack of hope until Deborah arose to speak the quickening word. The tribes are scattered and separated, but the feeling of unity in race and religion is not lost; the response that they make to this magnificent appeal is regarded as the measure of their faith in the God of Israel. Judah, that played such an important part in building the Kingdom and establishing the true faith, is missing and is not even mentioned. The noble example of those who risked their lives on the high places of the field is praised, a taunting question is put to those who being divided wasted their time in useless discussions and so lost the great opportunity, a curse is pronounced on those who had a chance to inflict damage on the enemy and failed in their duty.

The striking thing about these two chapters is the position given to women and the light incidentally thrown on the position of women under the conditions

and circumstances of war. In the song a woman begins the war and a woman ends it, in the one case our whole-hearted admiration goes out towards the strong woman who like Joan of Arc hears a voice calling her to the service of her nation. She stimulates the leaders and wakens a wild and irresistible enthusiasm among the people. It is thus that great movements are started and move on with increasing force to their goal. In the case of Jael, while her deed is splendidly described in the song and repeated in the story in what we regard as a worse form, it does not awaken in our mind any such cordial response as moved the hearts of the original hearers. "Blessed be Jael among women" does not need an elaborate apology, it simply needs to be understood, a people fighting for their life, not merely their lives, had no mercy on the fallen foe. From the Christian standpoint her action cannot be praised, but even now the Christian ideal is apt to be forgotten in actual war. These Hebrew women, with their patriotism that could be stern and even cruel, compare favourably with the Philistine women in the Samson story who have become types of fascinating sensuality and heartless treachery. True to life if not touched by any spirit of chivalry are the lines that describe the lot of women in war; the young girls were part of the soldier's booty, "a damsel, two damsels, to every man": what a powerful impression is made by simply placing two pictures side by side; at the very moment when Sisera "fell down dead" the Queen-mother, the most important in an Oriental Court, looked far through the window and cried:

> Why is his chariot so long in coming?
> Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?

An everlasting symbol of the cruelty of war, women waiting eagerly for the men who *never* will return.

"The song of Deborah is the only political poem of large range in the Old Testament; considered from the æsthetic side it is a masterpiece. Whether sometimes the characteristics of great events are emphasized in terse phrases, whether again the synonyms are heaped in luxuriant diffuseness and a complete small scene is transfused with a dazzling light, whether the grandiose majesty of Yahweh is described in the shaking of heaven and earth, or whether the grim discord of revenge utters its cry, we feel always the same admiration for the strength and burning passion of the God-gifted poet. That which is lacking in the composition is of course not to be overlooked. The connexion of the particular episodes into a living organism has not been attained. In the epic descriptions we have the attempts towards an epic, but the Israelites lacked the inclination and indeed the gifts for its completion. Yet the pictures arranged in a loosely ordered series produce a general effect whose majestic impression no one can resist. From the moral standpoint a particular objection may be made here and there, but when—as here—religion and patriotism are so closely blended we can never apply the standard of common morality. Untroubled by reflection, young Israel traced the living breath of God in the storm-wind that swept over the battlefield, and in the destruction of its enemies the act of Yahweh. What moved the poet shows not only the artistic vision and the classic style but a living religious experience" (Gressmann).

This is not the place for a thorough investigation of the prose narrative and a complete comparison of the two accounts of the battle. We could wish that there

were more cases where a great event in the history had found expression in simple story and inspiring song. The two agree as to their main outlines, but differ in more or less important particulars; one of these differences best known relates to the manner in which Sisera meets his shameful death at the hands of a woman (iv. 21; v. 26. For the shame of being slain by a woman, cf. ix. 54). We have more information about Deborah, who is a married woman and prophetess. Here the ruler is Jabin, *King* of Canaan, and Sisera is the commander-in-chief of the army; only two of the tribes, Zebulon and Naphtali, are mentioned, though it is not said distinctly that they were the only ones to take part. In the narrative the battle is farther north; and there is reluctance ascribed to Barak which brings forth the prediction that the glory of the victory will be given to a woman. These things do not affect the substantial historicity of the narrative and certainly not the beauty of the song. They do make quite impossible a mechanical view of inspiration, but intelligent students are now disposed to welcome illustrations in that direction as the variety of human thought is preserved and we appreciate more fully how under such difficult circumstances the Hebrews sought to preserve the living thread of their history because it was to them the clearest manifestation of God's presence and power.

XII. THE SWORD OF YAHWEH AND OF GIDEON

Judges vi.–ix.

In the book of Judges, though we have no orderly systematic history, we gain a real impression of the difficult situation in which the Israelite tribes were placed, and the almost insuperable difficulties that stood in the way of forming a united kingdom. It is true that both the great empires of Egypt and Assyria were fully occupied at home, so that Palestine was left free for the survival of the strongest and fittest of the local tribes. It was a time of serious upheaval and the great empires needed time to renew their strength. But even apart from interference by great imperial armies, the Hebrews had to meet keen opposition, and it was wonderful that they escaped destruction or absorption. Though this book does not show any high spiritual quality in their religious life, it does show that it was religion that kept alive the sense of kinship and caused them to subdue in some measure tribal jealousies in the face of their dangerous foes. Strong men were raised up to meet the enemy of the hour, Ehud against the Moabites, Barak against the Canaanites, Gideon against the Midianites. The memory of the central facts was impressed upon the mind of the people, the stories of heroic deeds were told to keep alive their faith and patriotism.

This may be seen from the allusions of later writings : " the rod of his oppressor thou hast broken as in the day of Midian " (Isa. ix. 4) ; " and Yahweh of hosts shall stir up against him a scourge, as in the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb " (Isa. x. 26 ff., also Ps. lxxxiii. 11). But around the core of historical tradition various stories have been woven ; still later, parallel accounts have been blended and mingled with sermonic additions and interpretations. This process, in its various stages, is a testimony to Hebrew feeling for the importance of history, and shows their clear recognition of the vital connexion between their present and the past.

The Midianite bands made raids upon the settled country ; the Canaanites had a measure of protection in the fortified cities, but the Israelites were more exposed ; the tribe of Manasseh on account of its position between the South of the plain of Jezreel and Shechem suffered heavily from these frequent incursions. The dens and caves in the country are in this account supposed to have been made at this time as places of refuge. These Bedouins, fierce robbers on their swift camels, came at harvest time and swept the country clean : " They destroyed the increase of the earth till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass." According to this the raiders crossed the Jordan and penetrated into the very heart of the country. This kind of invasion happened at different times, sometimes the robber bands may have been checked early in their career, and driven across the Jordan, at other times they spread destruction over a wide area, and again it was possible for them to suffer from counter-raids, surprises and stratagems. It was under these conditions and in meeting circum-

stances of this kind that Gideon rendered his service and gained his glory.

I. *The Original Gideon.* Having recognized the complexity of the literary and historical problems, we cannot claim that the lines between different strata of tradition or different shades of interpretation can be clearly drawn. For those who have time it is useful to follow the minute researches of critics into the variations of vocabulary, the vacillation of tradition, the uncertainties of topography. We thus gain not only a first-hand impression of the difficulties of the problems, but also a fuller realization of the rich variety of life that lies behind these documents. They are not legal records or official testimonies ; they have been worked over but not put through one mould and fused into a smooth consistent whole. Primitive stories can be discerned, late ecclesiastical system and doctrine can be recognized, but between these two are streams of living traditions whose boundaries are difficult to define.[1] The earliest portions can scarcely be regarded as contemporary records, but the realistic scene (viii. 10ff.) has been recognized as a first beginning of historical narrative which preserves the essential features of the historical event, a forerunner of that noble art of truthful vivid description of which the story of Absalom's revolt is such a fine example. The number and variety of the stories show the powerful impression made on the people by his heroic opposition to the desert tribes who came to reap where they had not sown.

Though the defence of his own district and vengeance

[1] For a summary of the critical work since Studer (1835) *see* Moore (1895), " The attempt (at analysis into J, E, etc.) can only claim the character and value of a critical experiment."

for the murder of his brothers quickened Gideon's patriotic activity, yet in the strong feeling by which he was moved the call of Israel's God was recognized. "The spirit of Yahweh clothed itself with (i.e. took possession of) Gideon; and he blew a trumpet and Abiezer was gathered after him" (vi. 34). War was regarded as a sacred business with its own ritual laws (2 Sam. xi. 11), and the warrior who responded to the call of his country was driven by a divine energy (1 Sam. xi. 6). This thought is more fully expressed in the vocation-story (vi. 11–24), which shows that Gideon was called to his great task by "the angel of Yahweh." The God of Israel appears to His servant in human form; a generous meal is brought; it is accepted, turned into a sacrifice and consumed by fire, then the strange visitor vanishes. Thus in the ancient story two things are explained: (1) How it was that Gideon became such a mighty man and accomplished great things for Israel; he was chosen by God who, in spite of appearances, always chooses the right instrument to carry out His purposes. (2) How there came to be an altar, a sacred place at Ophrah of the Abiezerites called "Yahweh is friendly." These two motives are found singly or blended in other stories. Gideon may have been a man of valour and his father the head of a strong clan, but the story-teller is true to the fact that strong men have the spirit of humility in the presence of their God, however fierce they may be towards their enemies; and relatively the clan of Abiezer was small compared with the great work to be done. So when the call comes "Go in this thy might and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian," he replies, "Behold my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (Micah v. 2; Jer. i.

6). However much our views on science and philosophy may change here are central thoughts of religion which must remain so long as men have faith in a living God.

Gideon is certainly represented as a strong man, quick to adapt his plans to the circumstances, swift and determined in carrying them out; if we forget the standards of his time we are tempted to call him a cruel and relentless enemy. It is not necessary to examine in detail the story of the successful surprise attack upon the Midianites. More important than the puzzles about the trumpets, torches and pitchers, probably caused by a blending of sources, is the watchword "For Yahweh and for Gideon" (vii. 18), showing that the God of battles is exalted even while united with the military leader. Faith and courage combined with skilful strategy puts to flight the armies of the aliens. He is represented as being to some extent conciliatory and tactful in dealing with tribal jealousies that were apt to arise (cf. xii. 5). When the men of Ephraim reproached him for not calling them into action sooner and so ignoring their natural leadership, he uses the soft answer that turns away wrath in the memorable words, "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"

Sterner is his treatment of the two cities Succoth and Penuel. Gideon and his small army crossed the Jordan in pursuit of the Midianites and came to these cities whose exact site is not known but which were near to the river Jabbok. There they came "faint yet pursuing." We are loth to lose this memorable phrase, though some maintain that "weary and hungry" is more suitable. Their request for food is met with sharp derisive remarks, they are reminded that they should not speak

as if already victorious and are advised to give up their wild adventures. This is not a case of tribal jealousy as probably many of the inhabitants and officers of these towns were non-Israelites. They no doubt repented a little later when they had to pay such a heavy price for their strict neutrality. Quite antique though not so harsh is the grim story of the slaying of Zebah and Zalmunna ; these Midianite chiefs plead guilty of killing Gideon's two brothers. It is supposed that this was murder and not done in open battle, and so the sacred duty of blood-revenge lies upon the surviving brother. The boy Jether called to act as executioner is fainthearted, and the captives, wishing to avoid the shame and perhaps the torture of being hacked by a boy, lacking strength and skill for such a terrible task, appeal to Gideon : " Rise thou and fall on us ; for as the man is, so is his strength."

II. *Gideon in Later Tradition.* The story of the fleece is evidently a duplicate : Gideon has already been called (vi. 14), a wonderful sign has been given (vi. 21), and the spirit of Yahweh has come upon him (vi. 34). Then comes the statement of a new sign, when the man lays a test upon his God. This does no great honour to Gideon as it places him in the class of Jews " who seek after a sign." It lacks the freshness and vigour of the more primitive story ; note also the use of the name " God " instead of " Yahweh " or " Messenger of Yahweh." It has been turned into an allegory of the Jewish nation which was first the sole object of divine grace but became unworthy of it when this grace overflowed into the larger world. We can now recognize the futility of that kind of interpretation while we acknowledge its ingenuity.

A sermon showing that God can save by few as well

as by many appears in vii. 2–8. This is the most ancient way of delivering such sermons ; the truth was embodied in a tale, the sermon assumed the form of a story. But it was not necessarily a parable invented for the purpose, it grew out of the study of the history. It could not be entirely overlooked that Gideon was the leader of a small brave clan which accomplished great things, though not unaided by other forces. When he came to be regarded as a ruler over a large part of Israel that carried with it the idea of immense armies. There must have been a reason why these great armies did not take the field. If they had done so, the glory due to the God of Israel might have been given to human agents. At the heart of this reasoning there is not only zeal for the glory of God but also actual human experience. Large armies could not move swiftly in that territory, disaster often came through cowards and camp-followers. Many a time a small, efficient, courageous, determined force has thrown into a panic what seemed to be an invincible host. First the fainthearted were allowed to retire to the number of 22,000 ; this was certainly a large number to class themselves as cowards. These were regarded not only as useless but as a menace to others. " What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted ? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart melt as his heart " (Deut. xx. 8). It was then a quite natural supposition that those liable to panic were under demoniac influence. Those that threw themselves down and lapped the water like a dog amounted to 300 and furnished the number required. It is not clear why these were chosen. We must suppose that they were regarded as strong, courageous men who could be trusted to follow their leader.

The passage vi. 25–32 is peculiar in that Gideon appears in the rôle of religious reformer. His father held an important position in Ophrah and on his land there was a Baal altar and a sacred pillar. By divine command Gideon goes by night with ten slaves to cut down the pillar and destroy the altar and to substitute an altar to Yahweh. This is accomplished, and when the people next morning find that sacrilege has been committed they demand that the culprit shall be surrendered to them to be put to death. They are met by Joash with the keen question, "Will ye plead for Baal, if he is a god let him plead for himself?" The writer of this story knew two things, that in his own time there was in Ophrah an altar to Yahweh and that in an earlier time there had been a Baal altar, and this story tells how the two facts are connected and gives the history of how Yahweh has taken possession of the Baal altars. All these are real facts in the life of Israel, but their connexion with the career of Gideon is uncertain. To the later writer the religious history was more important than the military exploits. It took many generations to carry through the work of removing the altars of Baal and destroying the heathenish elements in Canaanite religion. Gideon played his part in those rude days by keeping his people from being destroyed by the desert tribes or being absorbed by the Canaanites.

III. *Gideon and the Kingdom.* It is probable that Gideon, after his victories, did hold the position of a local ruler, but it is not likely that he was offered the Kingdom of Israel in the same sense as Saul and David. A pious man according to the ideas of his time, he took the spoils given to him and turned them to a religious use; he set up a golden image, a sacred symbol, which, the editor tells us, became a temptation and a snare to

the people. We are told that he had many wives and a large family : when he passed away " in a good old age " Abimelech, the son of a concubine, aimed at filling his father's position and in true Oriental fashion set about to clear away all rivals by wholesale massacre. From the one son of Gideon that escaped we will hear later. The question of Kingship in Israel must have been debated a long time among the Israelites, and as we see from the records there was difference of opinion. The Canaanites had kings, but among the Hebrews the old loose tribal constitution prevailed, a Sheikh or chief had a certain headship, gave counsel in peace and leadership in war, but without military equipment for enforcing his will. The Canaanite kingdoms were city kingdoms and the ruler was an autocrat. Shechem was a city of mixed population, Abimelech can claim kinship with the Canaanites and he puts the question to them, " Whether is better for you, that all the sons of Jerubbaal, which are three score and ten persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you ? " So Abimelech became one of these petty kings and his career was short, only three years. A reign begun in that fashion could not lead to peace and prosperity. A good reflection of the life of those days may be found in the story of the quarrel of the Shechemites with Abimelech. How they " held festival and went into the house of their god, and did eat and drink and cursed Abimelech." The quarrels and changing fortunes of these cliques, ending with Abimelech's shameful death, are briefly told for the sake of enforcing the lesson that such abominable wickedness does not go unpunished. Kingdoms of that kind were not desirable in Israel ; it is evident that the time was not ripe for a real kingdom.

This gives interest to the rare specimen of a literary

form that has played its part in many nations, viz. the fable, put into the mouth of Jotham, the son of Gideon (ix. 8–16) :

Hearken unto me, freemen of Shechem,
And may God hearken unto you !
Once upon a time the trees went forth,
To anoint a king over them.
Then they said to the olive tree, " Be King over us."
But the olive tree answered them :
" Shall I leave my fatness,
With which gods and men are honoured,
That I may go to sway over the trees ? "
Then the trees spoke to the fig-tree.
" Come thou and rule over us ! "
But the fig-tree answered them :
" Shall I leave my sweetness,
And my abundant produce,
That I may go to sway over the trees ? "
Then spake the trees to the vine :
" Come thou and reign over us."
But the vine answered them,
" Shall I leave my new wine,
Which cheers gods and men,
And go to sway over the trees ? "
Then said all the trees to the thorn-bush,
" Be thou King over us."
And the thorn answered the trees,
" If you really wish to anoint me,
So that I may be your King,
Then come trust in my shadow.
But if not, let fire come from the thorn-bush,
And devour the cedars of Lebanon."

It is difficult to settle the question whether we have here a general denunciation of the principle of the kingdom or satire confined to the particular case. Men who have noble characters and real work of their own do not wish to spend their energies in the attempt

to lord it over their fellow-men, while coarse-grained men, arrogant and worthless, are willing to play the tyrant and bully with danger to the community and, in the end, destruction to themselves. Thus, in any case, the fable rounds out the story of Gideon and draws a lesson from the fate of Abimelech. The rule of men should come from the call of God, working through the good sense of the community and not be snatched by self-seeking adventurers.

XIII. SAMSON : OR A STRONG MAN'S FAILURE

Judges xiii.–xvi. J (?)

In these chapters we have the narrative of the wonderful revelation through which the birth of Samson was announced, followed by the stories of his strange adventures. It has been shown that the birth-story in its language and style resembles the Yahwist narratives, and it is clear that the whole group belongs to the earliest type of popular tales. This cycle no doubt existed before it was brought into the book of Judges ; its connexion with the book is slight, and while there are interpolations in the text, it does not seem to have been touched by the latest editor. The presence of such material in the Bible sometimes causes trouble as it demands drastic treatment in the way either of criticism or apology. That immense research, showing diligence, skill and ingenuity, has been spent upon it is evident from the long history of interpretation and the recent work of specialists. Discussions of the following type can now be dispensed with. "It is not possible without upsetting all morality to make a saint of Samson, but some have been constrained at least to justify him as much as possible ; others have regarded the loss of his strength as the punishment of his sin. One can even read in Dom Calmet, 'We note in the person and in the life of Samson so many features that represent Jesus

Christ to us that it is almost impossible not to be struck by it, even on a superficial reading.' But the parallel in which the excellent author finds pleasure seems repulsive to our piety which is less ingenious or more fastidious" (Père Lagrange). This author claims for Samson a historical position and gives him the credit of beginning the battles against the Philistines.[1] "Samson appears to us as a separate individual. He carries on a private war against the Philistines, he seeks his own vengeance, and the author points out expressly that it was only by Yahweh's designs that circumstances turned against the Philistines (xiv. 4). The Judeans who were not bound to defend him, as a member of their tribe, did not hesitate to deliver him to his enemies. Budde was not wrong in noting that it must have been a case of extreme prostration when they considered such personal exploits as a great advantage to Israel. The historic framework is then perfectly definite and there is no need to cast a doubt upon the struggle of the Danite hero against his enemies. However, it is evident that the popular enthusiasm played its part in the case of Samson. Besides he has the stamp of a popular hero, ready to run any risks, showing weakness in the case of women, with a sharp biting wit. But in all that there is nothing mythological."

We are here in the region of "folk-lore," but that statement does not carry us very far, as it is an indefinite name for a very misty region. When a story is told to represent a great truth, or to idealize a great personality, we have passed into a higher sphere. Here, while there are many interesting references to ancient religious ideas and customs and also suggestions

[1] *See* ch. xix.

of practical lessons, we are dealing, not with serious history, but with popular tales. The exact time and manner of their origin is unknown, no one can tell how far local traditions have been modified by mythical features. We do not know the precise kind of impression they made upon the earliest hearers and readers, but we may be sure that they would not have been preserved, as part of the sacred book, if they had not given pleasure and profit of some kind. The case has been well stated by one of the ablest commentators on this book: "Samson is a solitary hero, endowed with prodigious strength, who in his own quarrel, single-handed makes havoc among the Philistines, but in no way appears as the champion or deliverer of Israel. It is easy to see why he should have been a favourite figure of Israelite folk-story, the drastic humour of which is strongly impressed upon the narrative of his adventures; but not so easy to see what place he has in the religious pragmatism of the Deuteronomic Book of Judges, or indeed in what sense he can be called a Judge at all." "They (i.e. these tales) are almost the only specimens of their kind that have been preserved; and they give us a glimpse of a side of old Israelite life and character which is rarely represented in the Old Testament. The scrapes into which Samson's weakness for women brought him, the way in which he turned the tables on those who thought that they had got the best of him, the hard knocks he dealt the uncircumcised, and the practical jokes he played on them, must have made these stories great favourites with a story-loving race such as all the Semites are; and the rude humour which plays through them all, no less than the entire absence of moral, proves them genuine tales of the

people. What basis of fact the stories have is not easy to tell."[1]

We may well be thankful that neither pragmatism nor puritanism has hindered the preservation of these ancient stories. Human documents they are in a very real sense and perhaps they sometimes test severely our belief that the divine is revealed through the human. When solar or astral theories have been rejected and the old story brought down to earth, some may feel that it is too earthly; but if it is frankly accepted as a popular picture that, in its own way, gave natural pleasure and religious quickening, we may still, without undue pressure, find suggestions that link us to the distant past. These parts of our Bible cannot be protected from severe searching criticism; it is when we recognize that they do not need any protection, and that it is only after such criticism has done its work that their real strength can be appreciated—it is then that we realize how fully truth can be embodied in a tale. "All our life is like a tale that is told, and its meaning is better to be grasped in story than in any other way. Our religion begins with a story, and the best part of religion is always to be put into story form. True it is that the mystery and the passion, the love and the sacrifice can never be expressed in words, but they will hover round a story" (H. Snell).

The announcement of Samson's birth is told very

[1] Moore. Cf. Macalister. "It is sufficient for the purpose of our present discussion that the tale gives us an early tradition of the condition of affairs at the time indicated; and as I have said elsewhere it is probably to be regarded as a prose epic concentrating, into the person of a single ideal hero, the various incidents of a guerilla border-warfare."

fully in xiii., the theophany and the sacrifice may be compared with the appearance of the "angel of Yahweh" to Gideon in vi. The twofold impressive appearance of the man with the wonderful name is surely the herald of an important event. Such revelations bring terror and hope, and in the end a great joy. To us there is a striking incongruity between the wonderful prophecy and severe preparation and the rude figure that next appears full grown upon the scene. We would expect a great religious leader, what we call a saintly man. Perhaps the fault is not all on the side of the ancient thinkers; it may be that with increase of mysticism and refinement we have lost something of virility. At any rate the story recognizes, in its own way, a fact upon which much stress is now laid, viz., that the preparation for a strong man's life begins before he is born. It has been said "that corruption travels in the blood but grace does not"; that, however, is a theological statement that confuses the two separate spheres, the physical and the moral. Even if ritualistic ideas lay behind these prohibitions, the effect was wholesome. The child reaps the reward of the mother's self-denial. How natural also the question, "What shall be the rule of the boy's life and what his course of conduct?" That we also would like to know, but we may do our duty and leave the future in the hands of God.

Next we meet the young man, strong and lusty; "the spirit of Yahweh" which begins to move upon him is a mighty energy that through his life is destined to manifest itself in daring deeds that require physical strength (for strong contrast, *see* Isa. xlii. 1–4). Along with this goes reckless wilfulness and stubborn

determination. To the natural protest against marrying outside his own tribe, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people?" he gives the characteristic reply, "get her for me; for she pleaseth me well." The pious story-teller points out that the father and mother did not understand the strange ways of Providence. The story moves on (to xv. 8) with restless energy, the incidents following each other in rapid succession. Samson went to the marriage feast, and we need not discuss here whether or not his father and mother went with him. The hero shows his strength and skill in conflict with the fierce young lion and then his wit in propounding a riddle to the Philistines. The quality of a riddle is a matter of taste; it can be said that it was a bad riddle, as no one could guess it who did not know the circumstances; but it has also been called "an elegant enigma better than that of Simonides." All that we are concerned with is that the earliest hearers of the story no doubt rejoiced in the belief that their hero beat the Philistines at the game of wits as well as in the more athletic contests. Samson is betrayed by a woman, that was his fate, a strong man conquered by a woman's tears. If we attempt to express the spirit of Samson's comment:

> If you had not plowed with my heifer,
> You would not have found my riddle,

we must say that the Philistines were "very poor sports." He, however, is not content with smart repartee, the natural anger is increased by the onrushing spirit of Yahweh which leads him to violent reprisals and when, as a result he loses his bride, a still further act of vengeance is carried out in fantastic

freakish fashion, and finally this involves her ruin and that of her father.[1]

It is not necessary to follow in detail all the incidents of the familiar story. The hero who could bear away the gates of Gaza is glorified as "the strong man"; whether he carried them one mile or forty is not important. The God who miraculously provides a spring to quench his thirst after a great battle is thought of as taking an interest in his warlike sport, though at a later time it was declared that He took no pleasure in a man's strong limbs. In our time the pendulum has swung again away from the pale emaciated type of saint. The Church encourages "muscular Christianity," and the sporting world worships exhibitions of strength in brutal as well as manly forms. The last chapter shows that Samson had not learned anything; the defeat that he so narrowly escaped before now comes upon him through a woman's wiles and brings his wild career to a close; later writers describe the danger from "the strange woman," and here it is presented in a living concrete form. The man emptied his soul, gave away his secret, and as if to suggest his loss of faith in the wonderful power of his consecration, the solemn word is spoken "he wist not that Yahweh had departed from him." He knew it not until it was too late and he lay helpless in the hands of his foes. A strong man is once more the victim of a woman's fickleness and treachery. It may be that after all women have some right to protest against the burden that has been laid upon them by artists

[1] "The marriage of Samson is the only instance in the Old Testament in which the bride remains in her father's house, and the husband lives with or visits her there; but such unions were probably not uncommon in early Israel" (Moore).

and poets presenting them as the constant source of temptation, whose fatal fascinations sap the strength of the strong.

Blind Samson reduced to menial service, grinding at the mill and called to make sport for the hated Philistines, is one of the tragic figures in history. Conscious of his slowly reviving strength and yet having lost all interest in life, his one desire is to have vengeance on those who had doomed him to perpetual darkness. With the prayer, "O that I might be avenged for one of my two eyes," and with the strength of despair, he played his last trick on the Philistines. His countrymen, to whom these tribes were a constant danger and torment, found in this statement an appropriate epitaph: "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life."

XIV. ROBBERY AND RITUAL

Judges xvii. xviii.

This story is so foreign to the prophetic teaching and the spirit of the true Christian life that it may repel rather than attract the modern reader. That feeling found expression long ago, embodied in the present text—we have notes by a Hebrew commentator that reveal an apologetic tone, reminding the readers that these things happened in rude lawless days. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1; xxi. 25), and yet it is true that "the historical value of these chapters is hardly inferior to any in the book. The picture of the social and religious state of the times which they contain is full of life and bears every mark of truthfulness."[1] It may be, however, that we are a little too hasty in asserting our superiority over men of earlier days; we have still to be on our guard against the materialistic and magical view of religion.

There are critics who think that they can divide the narrative into two strands, and assign them to the two earliest documents. But while it is evident that there are repetitions and marks of composition, such a complete analysis does not carry general conviction. The difficulty of such analysis is explained by those

[1] Moore's *Judges*, p. 370.

who accept it, from the supposition that the two narratives resembled each other very closely. The other view is interesting, viz., that the statements attributed to a second story never existed as such, but are later independent additions intended to place the actors in "an odious light," or in other words, the secondary stratum has an element of satire. Some might hesitate to accept this on the ground that such a mode of criticism was too subtle for the Hebrew mind. The best example is in xvii. 2–4; the idols in Micah's house have their origin in a theft. If that is a later supplement, it suggests by a kind of poetic justice that the gods made from stolen silver reached their final destination by way of robbery. The suggestion that the woman who owned the money was Delilah is interesting simply as a specimen of ancient exegesis (xvi. 6). There is evident repetition in the account of the setting up of the graven image at Dan (xviii. 30, 31). Duplication is clear in xviii. 17, 18, and the piling up of ritual apparatus, "the graven image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image," calls for examination. The discussion of the nature of the ephod and the position of the Levite are interesting in their own place, but the settlement of these problems is not essential to a comprehension of the spirit and meaning of the story.

Here we have an account of the migration of a certain number of Danites from their original settlement north-west of Judah. This is a small tribe or more correctly a clan (xviii. 2, 11, 9) mentioned in the earlier history but that seems to have played little or no part in later times, though the name remains in the well-known phrase "From Dan to Beersheba," as a designation of the extreme northern limit of Palestine.

At the beginning they attempted to settle in the south-west of Joseph, " and the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley " (Judges i. 34). That is, " they were pushed back into the hills in the angle between Ephraim and Judah." Samson the Danite is said to have lived in this district, and from there made his raids against the Philistines. The reference in the song of Deborah shows that the members of this clan are settled in the North ; " why does he live neighbour to the ships ? " A difficult verse interpreted to mean, " Why does he live, as a dependant, under protection of the Phœnician seafarers ? " (Moore). There are other two poetic references : Gen. xlix. 16 ; Deut. xxxiii. 22 ; in the former with a play upon the word Dan " to judge," and in the latter probably on " Laish "—" lion." The reputation of this small tribe for audacity and courage probably rests on raids for the purpose of plunder rather than war in any large sense. " There is something very characteristic in the whole of that fresh and most interesting narrative preserved to us in Judges xviii., a narrative without a parallel for the vivid glance it affords into the manners of that most distant time ; characteristic of boldness and sagacity, with a vein of grim sardonic humour, but undeformed by any unnecessary bloodshed.[1] The people who " dwelt in security after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure " had a rude awakening. To smite them with the edge of the sword and burn their city was *necessary* from the point of view of the Danites. It would be interesting, however, to hear what the people of Laish thought about it, There may be grim humour

[1] *Art.* Dan : Smith's B.D.

in stealing a man's gods and then suggesting that he should be glad that something much worse has not happened to him. Micah probably felt the grimness without appreciating the humour. He feels that he has just cause of complaint, but he is told to be silent lest some fellows who are in very bad temper turn upon him and slay him and his household (xviii. 25). Yielding to superior force he went home, not in a good temper, and had to find another god. However, there can be no doubt about " the vividness " of the story ; it is a strong realistic picture.

We are thankful to have the life of other lands and distant days preserved with such truth and simplicity. As we read the story, we do not find " religion " in our sense of the word. It is there in the forms of that age ; the money that has been devoted to God has a special curse upon it when stolen. Micah must have religious symbols in his house and desires a trained priest, the company of armed men are careful before attempting their military measures to consult the oracle, and to provide an idol and its minister for their new home is also necessary. Here there is no glimmering of the prophetic spirit, and yet we must believe that below the surface there was something nobler than the things we see. That the nation and the religion survived the conflicts and changes of this rude age is a marvel. This has been called " Israel's iron age," but surely there was gold somewhere, among the tribes whose life, soon after, became so rich in spiritual elements and prophetic power. The iron and the dross are still with us giving to religion, at times, a hardness and coarseness inconsistent with the gentle spirit of the Christ.

XV. SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF SAMUEL

(1 Sam. i.–xv.), Examination of the Documents

Samuel is a historical figure, a seer and priest in the days before Saul came to the throne. But it is clear that no regular reliable history of this period was preserved. Traditions of the events of this time, and of the work of men who played their part in it were handed down ; these were worked over from different points of view, and a variety of stories resulted. The extremely slight biography of this great man is composed of stories belonging to widely separated times and representing varied points of view. Scholars speak of historical legends, idyllic legends, political manifestoes, and theological tracts, and whatever we may think of such labels they certainly suggest a rich variety of life. Here, as elsewhere, we are reminded of the deep interest that thoughtful Israelites took in the history of their nation, and how in private life as well as in public affairs, they felt the all-pervading presence of their God. The variety of the material as to its origin, style, political interest and theological temper is recognized by careful critics, though there may be slight differences in the details of the analysis. There may have been separate lives of Samuel and Saul as preliminary to or part of the great history of David ; the union of these may have led to transpositions and additions which cannot now be completely identified.

The narratives in this section of the book of Samuel bring before us three important names: Eli the priest, Samuel the seer and Saul the king. Our chief concern is with Samuel, but a glance at the others is necessary in order to understand the position assigned to him. For this purpose we must review the first section of the book. The poem ii. 1–10 does not throw any light upon the social conditions or particular circumstances of the time. "The assertion that the *barren has borne seven while the prolific mother grows faint* is made only as an example of God's sovereign dealing with his creatures. Possibly this couplet may have drawn the editor's attention, and made him think the psalm appropriate for this place. But this sentence, with the rest of the composition, is too general to give us light on the situation of the author. The expressions used are those common to the songs gathered in the Psalter. Like many of them it voices the faith of the pious in Yahweh as ruler over the destinies of men." [1]

Eli and His Sons

While it is not wise to be over-confident in such matters, it is possible that the history of Eli and his sons is the oldest of these three groups (ii. 12–17; 22–25; 27–36; iv. 1b–vii. There is discussion as to the separate origin of ii. 27–36, a duplicate of iii. 11–18). This group may have been connected with the incomplete history in Judges; it deals with the Philistine oppression and the sad religious condition of the times involving the loss of the ark and the destruction of the sanctuary at Shiloh. From this vivid picture of

[1] H. P. Smith. Cf. Jonah ii.

shame and sorrow we still learn the lesson set forth in Jeremiah's stern words, " Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it, for the wickedness of my people Israel " (vii. 12).

This story is no doubt based on good traditions, though as a history it did not begin to take shape until after the events to which it refers. The calamity is regarded as the punishment of wickedness. The sons of Eli paid the just penalty for their selfishness and sensuality. It is a dark picture of priests who knew not the God whom they were supposed to serve, but cursed Him in their lives if not actually with their lips. Eli suffers on account of his weakness, for in some cases weakness is as fatal as wickedness. The story of the loss of the ark is powerfully told ; the confidence and hope of the Israelites when the daring step of bringing this sacred symbol into the battlefield was taken ; the consequent depression and despair of the Philistines who feel that now they must strain every nerve ; the disappointment of men who would make God the servant of their schemes instead of the ruler of their lives—all this is presented briefly by some man who brooded over the tragedy and began to see a deeper meaning in it. Solemn and striking is the close of this chapter when the man from Benjamin runs out of the battle line and comes to Shiloh, " with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head." We can almost hear the cry of the city when the sad news comes, the old men in great distress and the women weeping for the loss of their husbands. It does not require much imagination to see the man Eli, heavy and old, trembling for the ark of God and falling to his death. Life will struggle with death, even at

this moment a child is born, and as its mother passes away it receives from the bystanders a doleful name. Through it all Eli is a pathetic figure, overwhelmed by an unkindly fate, appealing to our sympathy and receiving from the original story-teller a touch of pity.

Attractive to the student of the history of religion is the story of the return of the Ark; it is a story of wonders remote from our present modes of thought and seems to offer little that is edifying. Behind the ancient accounts of panics and plagues the men of science may find hints of natural forces that were unknown to the ancient historian.[1] The chief thing to him was the fact that the Philistines could make no great gain out of Israel's sacred symbol; though the God of Israel might for sufficient cause deliver His people to defeat He could protect His own honour. In those days people had respect for other gods as well as their own and the interpretation of calamity as caused by the anger of a god was common to different peoples.

The Life of Saul

The life of Saul is found in ix., x. 1–16, xi., xiii. 2–xiv. 52. "It is evidently the older document. It is more primitive in its religious ideas. It has a near and clear view of the progress of events. We may class it with the stories of Gideon, Jephthah and Samson which form the groundwork of the book of Judges."[2] A careful reading of these passages and examination of the remaining chapters of this section

[1] *See* Macalister, p. 47.
[2] Dr. H. P. Smith.

reveals a number of duplicate narratives. Samuel and Saul appear in both, but the point of view is different as to the choice of Saul as king and his rejection. The author of the life of Samuel wrote for the benefit of a much later time and was dominated by the ideas of his own age. The facts lying behind these biographies is that Samuel the seer played an important part in the life of Saul and that the comparative failure of Saul's kingship was traced to Saul's lack of complete obedience to God's commands. Let the student read separately these stories of Saul's public life before he comes in contact with David and note that they are pictures of real life, full of local colour not yet weakened by late theological interpretation. On every page interesting sidelights are thrown on the social life and religious customs of these early days. There is the picture of the seer, the man of special gifts who answered difficult questions and gave signs for future guidance, the sacred meal and the treatment of honoured guests; the bands of enthusiasts, manifesting the abnormal excitement that characterized the prophets of that day. Vigorous and convincing is the account of Saul rushing to the help of the men of Jabesh Gilead. That is how a man became a king in those days, by rising to an emergency and proving that he possessed the true soldierly qualities. Instinct with life and close to reality is the narrative of the revolt against the Philistine. Jonathan's initiative and audacity crowned with success; Jonathan's life in peril through the unconscious violation of a taboo; thus the story of the revolt against the Philistines begins and ends with Jonathan's energy and courage, but all through it thrills with the spirit of noble adventure.

The Life of Samuel

For the life of Samuel we turn to the following passages—i., iii., vii. 3–17; viii., x. 17–25; xii., xv.

Here the position of Samuel is supreme, he is a theocratic ruler, a second Moses, he issues his commands to the king, he gives historical retrospects and preaches sermons to *all* Israel. Samuel is here the champion against the Philistines and the people are delivered by direct supernatural interposition and not by means of the skill and bravery of faithful men (cf. 2 Chron. xx.). It is possible that there was not unanimity of opinion as to the need and choice of a king, but surely the elaborate statement of the view that the demand for a king was the rejection of God and the powerful description of the selfish despotism of an Oriental monarch, belong to a later, more luxurious age (cf. Judges viii. 22; ix. 8).

The fierce conflict between the prophet and the king recorded in xv. arrests our attention, quickens our interest and divides our sympathies whether we regard it as a literal record or a pictorial expression of the conflict, not confined to any one period, between religious intolerance and political expedience (cf. 1 Kings xx. 42). It may be compared with xiii. 8–15, as showing the same spirit and motive, though it gives a much clearer reason for Saul's rejection.[1] The fact of the conflict between the prophet and the king and its disastrous effects upon the fortunes of the kingdom was an early element in the tradition though the form in which it is presented may be late.

[1] On the question of the later insertion of x. 8, xii. 8–15, into the Saul documents, *see* H. P. Smith.

Kings offered sacrifices at a later time and did not regard themselves as mere tools in the hands of priests and prophets. The passage (xv.) is evidently composite; the main feature is that Saul is condemned and rejected for not carrying out "the ban" in the strict severe sense.[1] The Amalekites are to be completely destroyed because the God of Israel will punish an ancient offence (x. 2, cf. Exod. xvii. 8; Num. xiv. 45). The soldier had to consider present circumstances and prospects, he could not be ruled entirely by history. History has its lessons, but these must not be taken over in a hard mechanical manner. The chapter contains a great passage representing later prophetic teaching which to our view does not harmonize well with the situation. Samuel is demanding that the sacrifice of enemies to the national God should be offered in exact accord with ancient custom. Samuel hewing Agag in pieces before Yahweh is not to us a pleasant inspiring picture. We must study this noble poem free from accretions and associations of that kind.

> Does Yahweh delight in offering and sacrifices
> As in obedience to the voice of Yahweh?
> Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice
> And to hearken than the fat of rams.
> For rebellion is the sin of soothsaying,
> Obstinacy is the iniquity of Teraphim.[2]

A Picture of Life.—Chap. 1. If the same writer composed all the pieces included in the life of Samuel, he possessed as well as definite views regarding the origin of the kingdom great gifts of story-telling. Such a picture of life as we find in the first chapter might be

[1] On The Ban, *see* ch. x.

[2] H. P. Smith.

written at any period within a considerable length of time. Political changes might take place without affecting the constitution of the family and its religion. We are not concerned now with the fact that Samuel's father was an Ephraimite, not a Levite, that the name Samuel cannot very well mean "asked from God," or with the precise meaning of "the double portion" or with the significance of the name Yahweh Sebaoth. The supreme thing here is the picture of the family, its social customs and religious spirit. The fact is merely stated that the man had two wives, that might not be the rule but it did not call for special comment; the language suggests the rivalry that is natural in such circumstances, and if the text is correct speaks of annoyance given by the more fortunate wife. That wretched phrase "race-suicide" had no meaning in those simple days; wife and mother were supposed to mean the same thing. Motherhood was the service and sacrifice of woman and also her supreme joy. To bear a son that would bring honour to the father's name and render service to his country, that was the woman's high ambition. The husband loves tenderly the barren wife but that, while better than harsh useless reproach, is not a complete consolation. What forms the religious life of the home took we are not told, but there is the yearly pilgrimage to the sanctuary to present gifts and rejoice before their God. The woman seeks comfort in this religious act and implores the help of her God; she may even have construed her disappointment as a sign of the divine anger; if so, she prays silently but with deep inward emotion for forgiveness and blessing. At such a festival there was no doubt excitement and exhilaration caused by the influence of "the wine that maketh glad the heart

of man." At times there was abuse of this, otherwise such a dialogue would not be found in the story. "And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I poured out my soul before Yahweh." The priest Eli recognizes the tones of sincerity and truthfulness; he sends her away with his blessing. In due time her prayer is answered and she returns to the Church the great gift that God has given to her. In the early days the first-born belonged in some sense to Yahweh; but this is not the observance of a rule, it is the spontaneous recognition of the fitness of things. Other children she may have now, but her first-born is not her own, it is his destiny to be specially dedicated to the highest service. In many forms the spirit of this woman has manifested itself, and even now a mother's prayers, vows and hopes must continue to be a spiritual force though it may defy external organization and elude our statistics.

The Idyll of Childhood. Chap. iii.

This picture is in its own way so perfect that we feel the helplessness of any feeble paraphrase or the impertinence of any rhetorical embellishment. A careful reading means that we consider certain textual difficulties (1, 13), which fortunately do not affect the picture, and note what scholars have to say concerning the ancient custom of sleeping in a sacred place in order to receive a divine message in the form of dreams. But when we turn back and once more read this short narrative—as a whole, these things

drop away, while the simplicity and beauty of the story remain. There are the two extremes, the old man bending under the weight of years, the difficulties of his position increased by the wickedness of his sons, he is oppressed by the sense of failure and the presentiment of coming disaster ; the boy who has so far lived a cloistered life, ministering at the same time to the Lord and to Eli, destined to receive a divine revelation and to begin a new period of religious revival. A bright figure on a dark background ; within the temple silence and the voice of God coming to lay upon a youth the responsibility of a man ; outside the rude world, the base passions and bitter conflicts which are the heralds of the coming storm. In the original or in our faithful translation the narrative is simple and beautiful. We have a few clear descriptive sentences, the direct impressive dialogue, the final acceptance of the fact that the voice comes from heaven and not from earth, the immortal words expressing the mood of the receptive soul—"speak, for thy servant heareth"—the terrible nature of the revelation, Eli's demand to hear the worst and his sad submission as that of a man who recognizes both the justice and severity of his doom—"it is Yahweh, let him do what is good in his sight" (cf. 2 Sam. xv. 26 ; Job i. 21). The picture will suggest different lines of reflection to those who meditate upon it, and that is where the parable has the advantage over any specific limited formula. We have no clear statements or definite statistics concerning the religious life of children in the early years of Israel's history in Palestine. These formal records that we prize so highly are lacking ; but we must not hastily infer that the spiritual substance was entirely absent. Fathers and

mothers are by this story reminded of their responsibilities and privileges; was not the sacred ark lost through the wickedness of undisciplined sons, does not a new era open by means of a consecrated youth? Long before the school arose with definite dogmatic and religious teaching these great truths, working in the minds of thoughtful men, became the subject of proverb and story.

XVI. SAUL: A TRAGEDY

General View, Based on Stories of Different Dates

The life of Saul has been called "a tragedy," and the general impression, left by a rapid review of his career, certainly justifies the use of a phrase that ought not to be employed without strong reasons. Though there were slight movements towards the political union and closer co-operation of the tribes before his time, he is correctly named "the first King of Israel."[1]

Thus, he stands at the beginning of a political and religious enterprise, which, though it seemed small at the time, is now seen to have contained within itself rich possibilities, whose full significance could only be discerned in the light of later events. The career of this man, in some ways a mirror and symbol of the life of his nation, has rightly been called "tragic"; there is much in it that moves us to pity and fear and that should help to cleanse us from self-conceit, from vain ambition and reckless pride. As we have already seen, in the early days men could not give "a biography" of a great man on anything like the modern scale and style. They could simply place side by side traditions and stories which had survived, and which aimed to give pictures of the man in the critical hours

[1] *See* pp. 187 ff.

of his life. The result is something more in the nature of a drama than a biography : there are great spaces of time between the scenes, the separate pictures are powerful, though not closely connected, but they give the impression of a living movement which like a decree of fate marches on towards the inevitable destiny. Saul's public life opens in the brightness of a great promise, its varied incidents record both inward conflicts and outward struggles, the burden grows heavier, the darkness deepens, the end comes at last in an overwhelming storm that leaves his kingdom a hopeless ruin.

The difficulties in the way of any complete survey of his life and an impartial estimate of his work arise from several facts : (1) The scantiness of the material at our disposal. True, there are many stories connecting his life with the ministry of Samuel and the adventures of David, but they are often disappointing from the historical point of view. These separate scenes are suggestive in the sermonic sense, with solemn warning rather than joyful inspiration. Hope soon passes out of the picture, giving place to a presentiment of failure, which prophesies the coming doom. (2) This again, to some extent, rests upon the fact that the story of his life is, in part, told by men of a much later age, who judged him according to the standards of their own time. The laws of the Church grew in clearness and strictness, conduct correct enough at the time seemed in later days to be unorthodox, and even wicked. We also may sometimes find it hard to believe that people of an earlier age, who were not pious exactly in our own way, still had a real religious life. (3) Further, his life and work were, to some extent, thrown into the shade by

the greater glory of the man David, who came after him, and who built up a splendid kingdom on the ruins that he left behind him. He has, in a measure, been used as a foil to set off, in all its attractiveness, the military genius, the chivalrous spirit and the heroic achievements of his splendid successor. These considerations have led modern historians to the conclusion that he has not received full justice and that, notwithstanding his mistakes and failures, he must be granted considerable credit, as a pioneer, in the great work of uniting the tribes and preparing the way for a larger kingdom. All these considerations may teach us the complexity of life, especially the life of a man in high position, who has to deal with complicated circumstances and reconcile conflicting parties. Life is still solemn and mysterious, failure assumes many forms, sensational, commonplace or even contemptible, but the ruin of a promising life, the loss of a soul is, in any form, a painful spectacle. Then, great opportunities are lost, splendid hopes perish, bright suggestions of heroism and romance fade into the gloom of depression and despair. The elements of tragedy, as reflected in these stories, may be briefly summarized.

1. Saul was thrust into a position that was too great for his powers ; he had to face the severe task of ruling a number of restless unsettled clans, and at the same time of meeting powerful enemies on many sides. The Israelites had not a very firm hold of their own territory, they had not completely conquered the land that was to be their home. There was difference of opinion as to the need of a king ; to some it seemed to be absolutely necessary, as the condition of political union and military success, but some were conservative

in temper, and thought that such a movement might show disloyalty to the Divine King. The Hebrews, like other small peoples who have played a great part in the struggle for liberty, were not easily "organized" and did not submit tamely to severe discipline. At the beginning of Saul's reign, when he sent round "the fiery cross," they rallied to his side, and gained a great victory, delivering from torture the men of Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. xi.). This was a brilliant beginning, but abiding power could not rest on a sudden successful spurt; it called for clearness of vision, steadfastness of purpose and continuity of policy.

According to the history, Saul did not seek this perilous position, but was chosen because "he looked the part," at a time when a king must have a fine personal appearance and possess the power to engage in actual combat. He must rule as well as reign, lead on the field of battle as well as preside in the council chamber. He reminds one of a tragic figure, who, in circumstances very different, met a terrible doom. Louis XVI, the descendant of a long line of kings, in his own way a strong patient man, would, we are told, have been a great success as a simple country squire, but called to bear the consequences of generations of misgovernment and to ride the storm of the French Revolution, he was hopeless, and presents one of the most pitiful, pathetic figures in the whole realm of history.

Of some men it is said that they spend so much time and strength in intrigue to gain a great position that they have no energy left to fit themselves for its duties. Neither Saul nor Louis can be condemned on that score, so they appeal all the more powerfully to our pity and sympathy. It is easy to criticize men who are called

to perform great public duties and face tasks of supreme difficulty; such criticism is often scattered in a light-hearted fashion by those who have little sense of responsibility. If this man, who was slowly borne down by the growing weight of his burdens and the increasing complexity of his problems, deserves more credit than has been given, let us be thankful that the failure was not absolute and complete. In such cases we may find some consolation in the thought that it is better to fall into the hands of God than of men (2 Sam. xxiv. 14).

2. The two tasks, to master one's circumstances and to control oneself, are closely connected. The man who loses his mental balance cannot continue long to rule masses of men and guide great affairs. In those days men had not given much thought to the subtle relations of body and mind; nor had much study been given to what we call "morbid conditions." Madness, the violent outbreak of ungovernable temper, was regarded as "an evil spirit from God," the sign of His anger, a direct punishment for sin. There is still a measure of truth in that ancient view, but it might easily lead to cruel misinterpretation and lack of sympathy. "To minister to a mind diseased" is no easy task; to cleanse the soul from "that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart" calls for the divinest power. "Therein the patient must minister to himself" sounds like hollow mockery. Music may charm for a while, but distraction is not recreation. Amusement may, when soberly used, bring relief from pressing cares, but when the disease strikes deep the thing that should give pleasure may increase the irritation. In normal conditions, to look upon the young cheerful courageous David should have been a pleasant sight

with some of the contagion of health and joy, but the insanity of jealousy destroys this healing, helpful power. There is nothing more insane than intense jealousy, which beclouds the vision and embitters the temper. It is a sign of weakness, and destroys the power of real leadership, for the strong man, in a difficult position, must learn to recognize, encourage and use all kinds of ability. He who gives way to it shows lack of faith in his own character and calling. Each man of real individuality can do his own work in his own way, and no other can do it in exactly the same fashion. "Saul has slain his thousands, David his tens of thousands." Why should the popular song cause more than a passing pang, why should it rankle so deeply and leave a festering wound? If David's strength and success is so great, is not that a gain for the kingdom, and is not the kingdom more important than any man's reputation? Alas, it is too much to expect that Saul should reach the high position, the calm unselfish temper which enables a man to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30 f.).

3. At the end there is presented to us the picture of a man who has lost his hold upon his religion and his God; the sources of light and guidance are cut off, he is driven into darkness. What can a frail mortal do in such an extremity? The modern rationalist, who lives in a richer world that poets and prophets have created, may claim that he is self-sufficient and equal to any emergency. Not so the Oriental who must seek in some way to commune with the unseen; not so a man like Saul, who lived when religion was for all men the supreme overshadowing reality of life. "The world will have a

religion of some kind, even though it should fly for it to the intellectual whoredom of spiritualism. What is really wanted is the lifting power of an ideal element in human life" (Tyndall).[1] To-morrow is to decide the fate of his kingdom; whatever may be the result, many of his followers must die on the battlefield for their country and their God. In the best of circumstances, this must be for the King or leader an hour of awful strain and heavy responsibility. There is no greater tragedy than that in such an hour, a man should feel himself shut off from heaven, thrown upon himself, and driven to helpless superstition. It is probable that intelligent men had already come to see that to seek help from ghosts, to attempt to rend the veil by the power of black arts was an act of disloyalty to their God. The Hebrew religion might be moving in a dim light, but its most faithful followers spurned the consolations of witchcraft and necromancy.

How unlike is the noble picture that the great dramatist gives of Henry V, the night before the battle of Agincourt:

"O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them! Not to-day, O Lord!
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown,
I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forcèd drops of blood,
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up
Toward heaven to pardon blood; and I have built
Two charities, where the sad and solemn priests

[1] Rev. J. Martineau and the Belfast Address.

Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do,
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence come after all,
Imploring pardon."

Saul, we are told, found the regular channels of communion with God closed against him; in the hour of his direst need the sacred oracle was dumb, and by his side there was no true prophet to guide and inspire him. The tradition is that he has outlawed himself by self-will and persistent disobedience. The God of Israel refuses to use him as an instrument for the nation's salvation. He finds no place of repentance though he seeks it carefully with tears.[1]

He may learn, if it is not too late to learn anything, that God's messages come in the light and not through the darkness, that those who do not respond to the teaching of the living can receive no new message from the dead; if the light of the sun and the beauty of living flowers do not speak to us of God, if the demands of the law and the prophetic voice awaken no response, then gloomy superstition must be a hopeless refuge. Whether or not the stories render exact justice to Saul, they are a real reflection of the facts of life and passions that move the human soul. They speak not of one but of many tragedies, and call us to that self-control that can only come through submission to the highest revelation of God's will.

[1] For the even stronger condemnation of a later time *see* 1 Chronicles x. 13.

XVII. SAUL AND THE WITCH OF ENDOR
1 Sam. xxviii. 3–25

The Critical Questions

It is not necessary here to discuss the question whether the documents in the book of Samuel are a continuation of J and E.[1] Scholars who agree on the broad lines of the analysis of the books of Samuel differ on that point. There is a further difference of opinion, among men who use the same methods, concerning the section with which we are now more particularly concerned. Some find that it is related to the older document which tells the story of Saul's life (e.g. ix.–x. 16; xi., xiii. 2–xiv. 52), while others connect it with the later story which gives Samuel the central and dominating position (e.g. i., iii., iv., vii. 3–17; viii., x. 17–25; xii., xv.). From the position of Samuel in our story the latter seems the more probable. These, however, are fine points which do not affect the judgment that these historical books are made up of biographies of Samuel, Saul, and David; fragmentary in their character, and drawn from different sources which show duplication as to facts and variety in the historical and theological standpoint. Somewhat similar in its character is the discussion of verses 17, 18, and part of 19; those who disclaim the relationship with the author of chap. xv. naturally regard them

[1] *See* pp. 22 ff. and cf. chap. xv.

as an insertion from that source, while even those who believe in such connexion think it possible that there has been later expansion especially in the case of verse 19, as the best type of such stories are not diffuse and repetitious.

With regard to less important details we may note the following: (1) The first half of verse 3 is found in xxv. 1, without any connexion, and with the difference that Samuel is said to have been buried in his *house*; the second half of that verse may be an editorial note anticipating verse 9. (2) In verse 12 the conjecture that a scribe has written *Samuel* in a mistake for *Saul* is very probable, though it does not appear to have much textual support. On this view the woman recognizes Saul before she sees any form, while as the text stands she infers that it is Saul from the fact that he calls for Samuel. It would be more natural for her to cry, "I see Samuel," but when she is asked a little later "What seest thou?" she replies simply, "An old man cometh up," etc., and leaves Saul to draw his own conclusion. (3) In 17, we read with the margin of R.V. "hath done unto thee, as he spake by me." (4) In 19 the Greek version is "thou and thy sons with thee shall fall."

A more important point has been the subject of keen controversy, viz. whether the words translated "familiar spirits" and "wizards" refer to *persons* or *things*, mediums who control spirits and possess the knowledge of enchantments or "the talismans and necromantic charms." The discussion is too technical for our present purpose (for a strong defence of the latter view *see* Dr. H. P. Smith's *Samuel*, p. 239). Fortunately it does not affect materially the sense of the story.

The Story

At this point a lengthy quotation from a skilful writer may be allowable as an illustration of the great difference between modern picturesque description and the few simple strokes of the ancient stories, which are not given to elaborate scene-painting or subtle psychological analysis.

"While the clouds thus gathered thick about his setting sun, it happened that the Philistines, against whom he had waged a lifelong war, invaded the land in greater force than ever. Saul mustered the militia of Israel to oppose them, and the two armies encamped on opposite hill-slopes with the broad valley of Jezreel lying between them. It was the eve of battle. The morrow would decide the fate of Israel. The king looked forward to the decisive struggle with deep misgiving. A weight like lead hung on his drooping spirits. He deemed himself forsaken of God, for all his attempts to lift the veil and pry into the future by means of the legitimate forms of divination had proved fruitless. The prophets were silent; the oracles were dumb; no vision of the night brightened with a ray of hope his heavy and dreamless sleep. Even music, which once could charm away his cares, was no longer at his command. His own violence had banished the deft musician, whose cunning hand had so often swept the strings and wakened all their harmonies to lap his troubled soul in momentary forgetfulness of sorrow. In his despair the king's mind reverted irresistibly to Samuel, the faithful counsellor to whom in happier days he had never looked in vain for help. But Samuel was in his grave at Ramah. Yet a thought struck the king. Might he not summon up the dead

seer from the grave and elicit words of hope and comfort from his ghostly lips? The thing was possible, but difficult; for he had himself driven into exile all the practitioners of the black art. He inquired of his servants, and learned from them that a witch still lived at the village of Endor, not many miles away to the north, among the hills on the farther side of the valley. The king resolved to consult her and, if possible, to set his harassing doubts and fears at rest. It was a hazardous enterprise, for between him and the witch's home lay the whole army of the Philistines. To go by day would have been to court death. It was necessary to wait for nightfall.

"Having made all his dispositions for battle, the king retired to his tent, but not to sleep. The fever in his blood forbade repose, and he impatiently expected the hour when he could set out under cover of darkness. At last the sun went down, the shadows deepened, and the tumult of the camp subsided into silence. The king now laid aside the regal pomp in which he had but lately shown himself to the army, and muffling his tall figure in a common robe he lifted the flap of the tent and, followed by two attendants, stole out into the night. Around him in the starlight lay the slumbering forms of his soldiers, stretched in groups on the bare ground about their piled arms, the dying embers of the fires casting here and there a fitful gleam on the sleepers. On the opposite hill-side, far as the eye could see, twinkled the watch-fires of the enemy, and the distant sounds of revelry and music, borne across the valley on the night wind, told of the triumph which the insolent foe anticipated on the morrow.

"Striking straight across the plain the three ad-

venturers came to the foot of the hills, and giving a wide berth to the last outpost of the Philistine camp, they began the ascent. A desolate track led them over the shoulder of the hill to the miserable village of Endor, its mud-built hovels stuck to the side of the rocks on the bare stony declivity. Away to the north Mount Tabor loomed up black and massive against the sky, and in the farthest distance the snowy top of Hermon showed pale and ghost-like in the starlight. But the travellers had neither leisure nor inclination to survey the nocturnal landscape. The king's guide led the way to a cottage; a light was burning in the window, and he tapped softly at the door. It seemed that the party was expected, for a woman's voice from within bade them enter. They did so, and closing the door behind them, they stood in the presence of the witch. The sacred writer has not described her appearance, so we are free to picture her according to our fancy. She may have been young and fair, with raven locks and lustrous eyes, or she may have been a wizened, toothless hag, with meeting nose and chin blear eyes and grizzled hair, bent double with age and infirmity. We cannot tell, and the king was doubtless too preoccupied to pay much attention to her aspect. He bluntly told her the object of his visit. 'Divine unto me,' he said, 'I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee.'"[1]

This story is placed in a context which tells of David's homeward march and his exploits (chaps. xxvii., xxix., xxx.). This is followed by the narrative of Saul's defeat and two different accounts of his death (xxxi. 5; 2 Sam. i. 10). The story is thus separate from its surroundings and may be considered by itself

[1] *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, p. 519.

as a sad chapter in the history of Saul. It is the opinion of careful historians that Saul has been thrown into the shade by the brilliant descriptions of David's achievements and successful reign, and that he has not received full credit for his share in the founding of the kingdom. On the other side, he is overshadowed by the great figure of Samuel represented as a powerful and faithful theocratic ruler. The general impression that is made arouses our pity and sympathy for a man incapable of coping with the difficulties of the situation, which were increased by his morbid jealousy and lack of real steadiness of vision and action. The pathetic figure appeals to us, teaching important lessons, not calling for any poor apologies or attempts to reverse the verdicts of history. Here we have the climax of all his troubles, David who might have been a strong support has been alienated and driven from his side, the nation is split within at the very time when it needed to present a solid front, and the Philistines, his inveterate foes, are come against him in overwhelming force. It is truly a dark hour and well may he think that his God has forsaken him.

In his helplessness he seeks counsel in ways that are condemned as false and heathenish. The laws against such things may in their final form belong to a later time, but they embody the pure prophetic spirit which had long been working in Israel (Deut. xviii. 10–12 ; Lev. xx. 27 ; Isa. viii. 19). This is no fit preparation for a great crisis, but to this he is driven in the extremity of his despair. Cut off from the living God he goes to seek a god who is merely a ghost. Prohibition and even drastic punishment does not easily destroy deep-rooted superstitions. Though "witches" are supposed to have been banished from the land, one

can easily be found, not so far away, and the night that should have been used for wholesome sleep is spent in this vain quest. The figure that the woman claims to see is by him easily accepted as Samuel, but from those lips he can receive no comfort, only the repetition and confirmation of his doom. Exhausted by fasting, perhaps, endured as a preparation for this dread ordeal, worn out by morbid excitement and the pressure of anxiety he falls helpless to the ground. The battle against the outward foe is already lost by the man who has never conquered himself. Not in such doubtful ways do men then or now receive clear vision and renewal of strength.

The Lessons

Lengthy discussions as to what this woman saw or pretended to see are futile. We cannot submit this to any scientific test or join in séance with her. We know that belief in communication with the dead was common enough then, as it is now in many parts of the world. We know that even those who condemned it might believe in its reality; they did not explore it and pronounce it "trickery." The world around them was full of possibilities, evil as well as good. They might be somewhat rigid in their adherence to their own legitimate means of seeking communion with the divine, but they had a healthy instinct, the result of noble teaching, which led them to avoid the morbid and unclean. Their worship was in the open, their religion was of the light; it was weakness, shame, and treachery to seek the living God among dead ghosts.[1]

[1] "The continued existence and the superhuman knowledge of the souls of the dead is implied in the practice of consulting

Even the dead themselves object to be disturbed. They have played their part, done their work, given their message; why cannot they be allowed to rest in the dim light of the underworld? This is everlastingly true, there is no new message from the dead, and no change of heart by such means for the living. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead" (Luke xv. 31). It is true that in days of disaster, when life is overshadowed by defeat, and widespread loss brings a sense of loneliness and weakness, it is natural for us to long to break the barriers that separate us from the unseen world. "Mediums," sincere or otherwise, have appealed to this feeling and in many cases made it a matter of gain, but the history of such "magic" and "spiritualism" is very largely a story of superstition and cruelty. Morbid curiosity has played into the hands of cunning greed. Often innocent visionaries have been cruelly condemned and clever schemers have escaped their just punishment. There may be cool scientific men capable of dabbling in such things, even as the physician and philosopher must investigate

the spirits. The classic example is that of Saul and the witch of Endor. There is no reason to doubt that the narrator believed in the reality of the apparition. The most significant thing is that the necromancer calls the ghost a god (verse 13). The wide prevalence of spiritistic arts in Israel down to a late period is proved by the polemic of the prophets (Isa. viii. 19) as well as by legal prohibitions in late as well as early codes (Exod. xxii. 17; Deut. xviii. 10 f.; Lev. xx. 27). The reason for the opposition is that the necromancer was priest or priestess of a religion which Yahweh would not tolerate; that is, they worshipped the spirits." *The Religion of Israel*, by Dr. H. P. Smith, p. 31. This scholar regards the literal historicity of the scene as very doubtful, but that it is a true reflection of the life and belief of those times as "indisputable," p. 122.

morbid conditions of body and mind, but in many cases madness lies that way. Those who were most powerfully drawn by promises to reveal the other world and unveil the secrets of the future were generally those whose minds were least able to stand the strain of abnormal conditions that tended to darken the mind and weaken the will.

Some think that the story suggests the conflict between kings and prophets. Certainly the kings often encouraged heathenish and superstitious practices, whether that is true in general of Saul or not (2 Kings xvi. 3; xxi. 6). And our story does embody in a vivid form the prophetic judgment against necromancy and other baleful forms of magic; more powerful than elaborate argument and direct exhortation is this dramatic scene which pictures to us a man who in a great crisis seeks light and strength in dark forbidden paths, and is broken down by the burden of his own past life.

The command "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" has, even in comparatively recent times, been crudely interpreted and cruelly applied. Men sometimes blocked the way to fuller light in their efforts to oppose the works of darkness. Still we venture to affirm that it was one of the stern watchwords of an upward movement. To-day in civilized countries we play with such things, find amusement in fortune telling and pastime in conjuring and we have forgotten how real and tragic was all that realm to men who lived in a world full of spirits and ghosts. It is one of the most bloodstained paths in the history of religion. The heart of this old story is true, its lesson is still pertinent and important. If we cannot find God in the order and beauty of the world, if the teaching of great

thinkers and the dreams of noble poets do not appeal to us, it the slow struggle after hope in immortality and the triumphant faith of the Christ do not quicken and strengthen us, then to seek the help of "mediums" and "witches" is not likely to nerve us for life's battle or save us from despair in the hour of defeat.

XVIII. AN ANCIENT TRAGEDY

2 Samuel xxi. 1–14 (Ninth Century)

The narrative relates to the beginning of David's reign, but it is found at the close, and so may be regarded as a separate story drawn from a different source, after the records of his earlier career had been compiled. Scholars accept it as real history, a faithful reflection of the life and thought of those ancient times. Critical questions, suitable for learned commentaries, need not detain us; we can address ourselves directly to that which is the real difficulty for the modern reader, the deliberate slaughter of the sons for the sins of the father.

The story tells of a prolonged famine in the land, the conviction that the disaster is in some form a sign of God's anger, the appeal to the oracles of the Church which brings the reply that "there is blood upon the house of Saul." Then the question must be faced, "How can the load of guilt be removed and Yahweh reconciled to His people?" The method chosen seeks to limit, as much as possible, the amount of suffering involved in the punishment, while bringing it into close relationship with the original sinner. To attain this end seven sons of Saul are hung or "impaled" before Yahweh "as a sacrifice to justice, and as a public acknowledgment of the sin." The atonement

is accepted, the curse removed, and life resumes its normal course.

The story is straight and simple ; it is not our business to apologize for it, but rather to try to understand it. To speak of it as "horrible" is a sentimental exaggeration ; it is grim, even tragic, but not mean or sordid. Seeking the ideas behind the action we learn to understand the men and the ruling ideas of their day. Our own ancestors, not long ago, passed death-sentences for comparatively slight offences against property.

From our standpoint they were unjust because the sacredness of property destroyed so largely the sense of the sacredness of human life. In judging public actions we must take into account the spirit and sentiment of the times. We need not make it a question of the responsibility of Israel's religion. The appeal was to the Church, the organ of revelation, the oracle declared that the cause of the national disaster was in Saul's sin, and the rulers were left to work out the problem according to their ideas of justice and mercy. When the solemn transaction was complete "the land had rest," and this is taken as a sign that the sacrifice was accepted. The suggestion that the decision was due to political influence or priestly revenge is lacking in proof.[1] That there was danger in Oriental courts of the fountain of justice being poisoned is well known. The impression that David makes upon us as a brave, chivalrous man, spurning to take advantage of a fallen foe, saves him from suspicion. We turn, then, from uncertain conjectures and face the real difficulty, which is a wide difference between our own way of thinking in such a case and that of men in those distant days.

[1] *See* 1 Sam. xxii. 16.

I. The Primitive View of Nature

"Nature" for us means something wonderful in its vastness, variety and complexity. We are in danger of losing God, or setting Him, as a silent figure, behind the complicated network of causes and effects that science reveals. To them the world was smaller and life simpler; it all stood in direct relation to the life of God. Through much time and toil, one universal law had been gained, viz. that suffering in some way springs from wickedness, ritual or moral. In this case the *wrong was the breaking of a treaty*. Almost a thousand years before the Christian era this was denounced as a crime against men and a sin against God. May we not call this a prophetic element in the story? Saul, in his excess of patriotic zeal, had broken a covenant solemnly made with the Gibeonites; he acted upon the principle "my country right or wrong," and on his conduct the verdict was passed "there is blood upon the house of Saul."[1] This clear recognition of a moral bond stronger than tribal ties or national interests is of permanent significance.

We can still find a large measure of truth in the thought that suffering follows sin, but we are compelled to hold it in a more discriminating fashion, and we cannot so easily bring "Nature" into the theological scheme. Our Lord has warned us against drawing our conclusions in a way that is both crude and cruel (Luke xiii. 1–4). In those days, when the means of transportation were imperfect, and relief from outside difficult, a famine was dangerous

[1] Josh. ix.

as well as inconvenient (Ruth i. 1). The most natural interpretation was that it was a sign of anger on the part of the beneficent God who "causeth grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man" (Ps. civ. 14). We cannot moralize the famine and the earthquake in the same way, but we can recognize that these men were seeking to understand the world in which they lived and to link it with the life of God. It is from that spirit that all true science and noble theology have sprung. We can find many illustrations of the fact that sin and sorrow are closely connected, but we cannot accept it as a complete explanation of all our calamities; with our fuller knowledge life has a larger background of mystery.

II. The Search for Justice

Having found the wrong and fixed the guilt, the pressing question is, How can the curse be removed and the nation set again into right relation with its God? This must be faced in what, according to the ideas of the time, was a rational and religious procedure. It is we who betray stupidity if we judge them rigidly according to the standards of our time. Behind their thinking there was the stern doctrine, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." In this case it cannot be carried out literally, and so the seven sons of Saul are sacrificed to expiate the father's guilt. We know that in actual life sons do often suffer on account of their father's sins, but to enforce this, as a deliberate judicial decision, is repulsive to us. That it is unjust was clearly recognized in Israel four centuries later (Deut. xxiv.; Ezek. xviii.). It is tribal law, based upon the thought of

the "solidarity" of the family and clan. To the principle "we are members one of another" it gave an absolute and realistic interpretation.

The word of the Gibeonites, "It is not a matter of silver or gold between us," is very significant coming from men who declare that they do not seek bloody vengeance but simple justice. The antique feeling is that there are some things that money cannot buy; there is a stern unbending justice that cannot be bribed. There is a stage when money can buy the freedom of the slave; the opportunity passes and the price exacted is the blood of the first-born. The curse may enter into the fibre of the nation's life and it is not ritual rule but stern reality that says, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." It may be doubted whether with our boasted progress, and our elaborate legal machinery, we have solved this problem of the search for justice so perfectly that we can afford to assume a cynical patronizing tone towards men who tried these painful experiments in their efforts after social righteousness.

III. The Tragedy of a Mother's Sorrow

It was a man's world in which woman, with certain brilliant exceptions, held a quite subordinate position. The sad silent figure of Rizpah, a living symbol, reminds us that often the heaviest burden fell on the woman who had no share in the guilt and no control over the laws. Her place was "the innermost part of the house," and her supreme interest and joy was in the life of her children. This woman was a subordinate wife, she may have been a slave but she was a woman with a mother's heart. A mother's love is one of the

noblest instincts, one of the purest and most powerful passions, and is not monopolized by any class. The decree of society seizes her sons and brings them within the range of this strange tragedy. She has no right of appeal, can make no effective protest; there is no refuge for her but sad silent resignation. The ancient stories do not attempt diffuse descriptions of inward struggles and fierce emotions, the stern facts are left to awaken the appropriate response in our hearts. For evermore Rizpah stands before the world bearing her terrible burden with a patient silence whose appeal is more powerful than the most eloquent speech.

Strange as it may seem, we have here not only piety but also theology. She stands there, enduring hardship, that she may keep the beasts and birds from the bodies of her loved ones, not simply to express her sense of bereavement, and pay a mother's last tribute of love, but also because she believes that, in this common fate that awaits us all, they cannot attain their final rest until they are decently buried in "mother earth." Her creed may have been vague, but it had a power that is sometimes lacking in our more refined theories. We may call it tradition, sentiment, superstition, but we do well to remember that simple souls cannot live on their rationalism. Her heart was broken; she will henceforth carry a scar upon her soul. She may continue to do her daily duties, but this sad scene will haunt her memory in many a lonely hour. Of another woman it was said that her impulsive unconventional act, because of the love that inspired it, should live as a noble protest against a narrow utilitarianism (Matt. xxvi. 13). Of Rizpah may we not say that her dumb grief, her mute anguish,

speaks to us of woman's sad lot, in that ancient world, where she so often bore an unequal share of life's sorrow, and where even the painful struggle for justice could cast a crushing burden on a mother's heart.

XIX. DAVID: THE FOUNDER OF THE KINGDOM

The fullest historical records and the largest, most varied collection of stories are gathered round the name of David. When it is shown that the Pentateuch cannot have been written or compiled by Moses, it is difficult to write a clear story of *his* life; but when we have discovered that David had little connexion with the Psalter and ignore the ecclesiastical garb in which the Chronicler has arrayed him, we still have a real outline of his career, and can form a reliable estimate of his character. A recent historian of the world has expressed surprise that the evangelists should think it "any honour to Jesus or to anyone to have such a man as an ancestor."[1] It is evident that the Jews of our Lord's day had an estimate of David's life, character and historical significance far higher than that which has commended itself to this particular historian. In this they have the support of capable scholars and keen investigators of many shades of opinion. This writer's summary of the life of David has at least the merit of brevity, a necessary virtue in a universal history. "David (990 B.C. roughly) was more politic and successful than his predecessor, and he seems to have placed himself under the protection of Hiram, King of Tyre. This Phœnician alliance sus-

[1] H. G. Wells, one vol. Ed., p. 498.

tained him, and was the essential element in the greatness of his son Solomon. His story, with its constant assassinations and executions, reads rather like the history of some savage chief than of a civilized monarch. It is told with great vividness in the second book of Samuel."[1] Let us be thankful that after this wonderful statement we can turn to the book of Samuel.

We must admit that it is often difficult to disentangle the original fact from later decorations, and we do well to remember " that even pure legends are of great historical value for the characterization of the age which produced them." But when we find a scholar of radical temper, after the severest criticism, writing the following statement, we feel that science has not been able to evade the powerful impression of the stories. " The generous elevation of David's character is seen most clearly in those parts of his life where an inferior nature would have been most at fault—in his conduct towards Saul (with which the story of Rizpah is in no way inconsistent), in the blameless reputation of himself and his band of outlaws in the wilderness of Judah, in his repentance (which we so greatly desire to believe) under the rebuke of Nathan, and in his noble and truly religious bearing on the revolt of Absalom, the accuracy of the account of which is guaranteed by the antique elements which it contains. His unfailing insight into character, and his power of winning men's hearts and touching their better impulses, appear in innumerable traits of the history (e.g. 2 Sam. xiv. 18–20 ; iii. 31–39 ; xxiii. 15–17). His knowledge of men was the divination of a poet rather than the acquired genius

[1] H. G. Wells, *loc. cit.*, p. 225.

of a statesman, and his capacity for rule stood in harmonious unity with his lyrical genius." [1]

Many witnesses can be called, and while it may be said that these are simply " impressions " they are the impressions of men who, while trying to escape the slavery of tradition, have honestly searched the histories and examined every word of the stories. " When he goes the greatest man of old Israel passes from the stage. Since Moses this people produced no man who could compare with him in creative energy. Without controversy the picture of his character shows many bright features and many dark shadows; he rises far above the average in good but also in evil, vehement in love and hate. But we have seen already that the sins into which he fell and the weaknesses of his character, which are not passed over in silence, are explained from the time in which God had placed him, and we must not forget the difficult circumstances with which he had to contend. Apart from Moses he did more for his people than anyone before him, and none of the kings that came after him can be compared with him. In a short time, he raised his people to a position of power that it never possessed before, and it was never able to attain afterwards. Earlier it was split up into mere clans and tribes, through him it became the most powerful nation in Syria. By conquering the surrounding peoples as well as through subduing the centrifugal tendency of his own people he became the real founder of the Israelite State," etc.[2]

Our estimate of the importance of David in the history of the world will depend upon our view of the

[1] Cheyne, *Encyc. Bib.*
[2] Stade's *Geschichte*, I, 298.

development of religious thought and life in Israel and the extent to which we regard that as a real contribution to the higher life of the world. He stands secure as a real historical figure, in fact, recent criticism has tended to increase rather than to lessen his significance for the political and religious life of the Hebrews. Before his time the history of Judah and related clans is obscure ; he brings that element into relation to the national life, and it becomes the more solid permanent part of the kingdom, which through its persistence and stability preserves the great traditions and the wonderful literature. The various stages of the literature in which this figure appears have their own particular interest and have exerted their own influence. (1) The actual man and his great career of which a real outline may be clearly discerned. (2) The David of history and story as he appears in the earliest documents. Let anyone read The Court History, 2 Sam. x.–xxii., as a specimen of the best narrative style which commends itself as actual history based upon reliable sources and reflecting the spirit of the times to which it refers. (3) There are traditions and legends of a later time which, though to a large extent imaginative and idealistic, still show the influence of the actual history with its recognition of the strength and charm of David's personality. (4) The later prophetic treatment, when the name of David stands as a symbol of the ideal king and the future Messiah ; this is parallel to (5) The priestly transformation by which he is turned into an ecclesiastical leader who arranged the temple ritual and " the service of song in the house of the Lord." The fact that these varied lines of interpretation gathered round the first *real* King of Israel not only shows that the ancient story-teller, as well as

the modern historian, tends to interpret great persons and important events according to the ideas of his own time, but also that in this case the earliest writers saw from many points of view the unique significance of David's career. When the history is carefully studied it may be seen that the beginnings or suggestions of these different views are really there, and that the Oriental imagination would naturally develop them to the full length in mechanical ways or in poetic forms. Without the founding of this kingdom the idea of the "Kingdom of God" would have taken a different form in the world; when David seized Jerusalem and brought there the Sacred Ark he laid the foundation of a new sanctuary of whose future history he could not dream, a sanctuary that has influenced the religion and politics of the world—"even unto this day." His ideas were those of his own time, though of a kindly, generous spirit he followed mainly the rude customs of his own day, but there is abundant evidence that he was a man of an intensely religious spirit. The history and story may be grouped in the threefold division of his life; first, as an attendant at the court of Saul and a leader in his army, second, as an outlaw and freebooter at the head of a small band of loyal followers, and third, the main portion of his career as King of Judah and then of all Israel.

He was compelled to be a man of war from his youth; the building up of a kingdom in a country surrounded by enemies on every side demanded many high qualities of strength and courage, political capacity and military skill, the power to strike terror into the hearts of his foes and to inspire enthusiastic loyalty in his own followers. One after another he reckoned with the enemies of his country; his first great problem

was the Philistines who had defeated Saul's army and shattered the Israelite kingdom.

The history of this remarkable people, the Philistines, is sketched, so far as the scanty materials will allow, by R. A. Stewart Macalister, who comes to the conclusion that "they were a people composed of several septs, derived from Crete and the South-west corner of Asia Minor."[1] He refers to an interesting story in the Golinischeff papyrus, which he calls "The Adventures of Wen-amon among the Philistines." "The *naïveté* of the style makes it one of the most vivid and convincing narratives that the ancient East affords." "A curious little travel story, or it may be the report of an Egyptian official who visited Canaan and the Phœnician coast, somewhere about the middle of the period of the Judges" (Peters).[2] A few words from Baentsch, in this connexion, are worth quoting as showing that the extra-Biblical stories cause the same differences of opinion as to their interpretation. "The whole statement is so comic, that it is quite comprehensible that some have doubted whether it is seriously meant to be an official report. It has been thought that we have to do with a satire. That is quite possible. But it does not do the slightest damage to the historical value of the document. Such a satire could not have been written if the political situation had not called it forth. In whatever way we judge this papyrus it remains a document of first-class importance, which gives us reliable conclusions concerning the political position of Egypt at that time" (*David und Sein Zeitalter*). The result is that, as we know from other sources, the

[1] The Schweich Lecture, 1914.

[2] The story may also be found in Breasted's *Records* and Barton's *Archæology and The Bible*.

Egyptian government failed to command respect any longer in these quarters, so that the Philistines could come in on one side and the Hebrews on the other, and the question had to be settled, which of these two races would rule in Palestine. David was the chief factor in the settlement of that question. The stories which reflect his relations with the Philistines as enemy, a kind of ally, a tributary and friendly conqueror, give us a picture of strange adventures and varying fortunes. He appears as a man who could use cunning where strength was not available, a man for whom Providence has reserved a high destiny and who, when the case was most hopeless, was bound to achieve a great success. The actual course of these events is not at all times clear, but when he could not succeed in holding his position as the ally of Saul, he managed his affairs with great skill and either before or soon after his conquest of Jerusalem he shook off the Philistines and built up a united kingdom which they could not face with any prospect of success.

We cannot accept the view that he used the sacred oracle to destroy the seven sons of Saul.[1] The judgment of careful students is that he was not responsible for the bloodshed that marked Solomon's ascent to the throne. These divisions, intrigues and massacres were not uncommon in Oriental lands when there was no orderly settlement of the succession to the throne. David, old and helpless on his bed, was in no condition to decree these grim measures, but the historian who recorded the tragic conflict might wish to clear Solomon, the man of peace, the temple builder, from such a bloody record. If we cannot literally follow the tradition that he composed psalms on his death-bed (2 Sam.

[1] *See* ch. xviii.

xxiii.), we may at least believe that in his weakness he muttered a prayer to the God in whom he had always believed. The story of his great sin is told with graphic detail (2 Sam. xi., xii.); the wickedness of the adultery and murder is not excused nor toned down. The Hebrews never believed in the doctrine that the king can do no wrong, though their estimate of moral actions may differ from ours; he also was responsible to the God who punishes iniquity. Nathan's parable, even if the punishment may have been made more severe by a later writer, is a splendid example of the prophetic spirit which led earnest men to rebuke the wickedness of their kings. Here is David at his worst, no apology or extenuation can be made, it is a black spot on the life of a man who rendered great services to his people.

The Spirit of the Stories

What kind of impression does the impartial reader, who has gained something of what we call "historical perspective," receive from the stories that have been gathered round the name of David? He may be influenced by the memory of the pleasure that they gave him in his youth, and if he has reluctantly given up as a literal photograph the story of the boy who slew the giant, he knows that it is still substantially true in the larger national sense. Even on a superficial reading, he finds repetitions and contradictions which show that the varied traditions could not without violence be worked into a smooth well-rounded whole. But from them, as they stand, he may gain the impression of a bright promising youth, a strong capable man, a great leader, a successful soldier, a man of generous impulses and strong passions, a nature essentially positive, one who with the simple theology of his time was swayed by

strong religious feeling. We have the testimony of a great company of scholars that the severest criticism does not destroy this impression. The man, who has been pictured in such a glorious light and raised to such heroic proportions, was an important figure in the life of Israel and the history of the world, whose career will still bear the severest scrutiny. After carrying too far their astral schemes and mythological speculations, men can still say, " that such an ideal figure could grow up from the historic David shows that in this historic David there was something that bore in itself a germ of the imperishable. Not every beloved average king can grow up into such an ideal figure, and if the caprice of a people or the decree of a ruler should wish to place such a king on an eternal pedestal, that would always make the impression of inward falsity, which later generations would simply have to correct by carefully removing the particular figure from the pedestal to which it does not belong. The judgment of history is incorruptible, it does not allow itself to bargain over anything. And also concerning David history has spoken. If a petty criticism of the great king's weakness, faults and sins still pushes them so fully into the foreground, it can never succeed in striking the man himself from the ranks of the world's great figures." [1]

The beautiful story which connects David with Samuel (1 Sam. xvi. 1–13) expresses the belief that the prophet who had designated Saul for his high task must perform the same office for David. Such stories can seldom claim to reproduce, except in imaginative and ideal forms, the actual scene which is regarded as a private preparation for a later public recognition. The strong sons of Jesse pass before the prophet and it

[1] *Baentsch*, p. 164.

looks as if the boy David was in danger of being overlooked, but the divine purpose cannot be defeated and the future hero comes to the front. "Now he was ruddy, a youth of fine eyes and goodly appearance" (xvii. 42). Thus did men who realized the greatness of David's work picture him as a handsome boy to whom the call of God came. The story of his vocation they expressed in a form meant to teach that the man who does a great life work is the subject of an election that represents not the common judgment of men but the wisdom of God. The spirit of Yahweh then came upon him, not as a violent spasmodic energy, but as a continuous influence to fit him for his great career. If we realized that to the mind of ancient writers the great beliefs embodied in a story were much more important than the external form, some of our difficulties would not cause so much trouble.

Immediately after, there are two accounts of how David came to the court of Saul, in one case as a cunning player and a mighty valiant man; in the other as a youth who has slain Goliath (cf. 2 Sam. xxi. 19). From this point onward there are many duplications, and while it is evident that separate narratives have been blended, the analysis is at many points a difficult and delicate task. On all sides there are testimonies to his attractive personality and subtle influence. "And David came to Saul and stood before him: and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer" (1 Sam. xvi. 21). "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David" (xvii. 1). "But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them" (verse 16). Saul's love we are told turned to jealousy and finally to hate; but

the love of Jonathan and the loyalty of the people remained constant through many changes. There may be contradictions real or apparent on many points, but the great witness to the power of his personality is the spirit of natural whole-hearted admiration in which the stories are written.

That he was a man of musical ability and poetic gifts there is no reason to doubt; that fact tells us something of the temperament which has its perils as well as its powers. He was a man of strong passions, of powerful emotions, but evidently preserved his balance better than Saul. In whatever way such stories as those in xix. 18 ff. have to be interpreted it is well known that in those days religious excitement and patriotic enthusiasm often assumed wild tempestuous forms; the king who was in sympathy with these emotions and could guide them into useful channels needed both courage and wisdom. His songs that have come down to us are lamentations, but it is possible that he composed others of a more cheerful kind (cf. xxx. 24). The elegy over Saul and Jonathan has no theology or affinities with psalms of later date, it suits the situation, it has the ring of sincerity as well as the beauty of real poetry.

> Saul and Jonathan the beloved and the lovely!
> In life and in death they were not divided,
> They were swifter than eagles,
> They were stronger than lions.
>
> I am distressed for thee, Jonathan, my brother,
> Thou wast delightsome to me—exceeding wonderful,
> Thy love to me was beyond the love of women.
> How are the mighty fallen,
> And the weapons of war perished.

The incident recorded in 2 Samuel xxiii. represents a

combination of religious devotion and poetic insight as well as the intense loyalty which such a man was able to inspire. The water for which men had risked their lives was too precious for his personal use, it was fit only for a sacred libation to his God. This act is both religious and poetic, in other words its conception shows deep religious feeling, its expression real artistic form.

The historians by direct statements and in impressive stories insist upon his "kindness" or "mercy," what we in certain circumstances call magnanimity (2 Sam. ix. 1; x. 1; 1 Sam. xxiv. 6; xxvi. 9). This must be regarded as an essential feature of his religion (Hos. vi. 6). His great sin, which has with so many people overshadowed his whole life and turned to ridicule the saying that "he was a man after God's own heart" must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that, according to the standards of his time, he was a man in whom religion and patriotism were kept alive from the same source, faith in the God of his fathers. His dread of exile springs from the fact that it means "go serve other gods." He dances before the Ark when it is brought to Jerusalem. Music and song were no doubt with him a form of worship as well as a source of pleasure. The stories gathered round his name are a rich treasury for the student of ancient modes of thought and life, but one of their highest uses is to keep alive the memory of a man to whom religion was a warm living feeling, a source of consolation and strength. He acknowledged his sins, he accepted his punishment and felt that it was better to fall into the hands of God than of men. It would be well if with our nobler theology and higher morality we could have something of the same passionate fervour and glowing enthusiasm, well also if our

leaders could reconcile as well as he did the divergent spheres of our national life, religion and politics.

NOTE.—Students of the history will find interesting discussions in Macalister's monograph; he thinks that it is not an unreasonable suggestion that we owe the alphabet to "the despised Philistines." "And even this is not all. The rude tribes of Israel were forced to wage a long and stubborn fight with Philistines for the possession of the Promised Land. For long it seemed doubtful whether Canaan would be retained by the Semitic tribes or lost to them; and it is no mere accident that the best known name of the country is derived from that of the sea-rovers. In the struggle the Hebrews learned the lessons of culture which they needed for their own advancement; and what was more important, they learned their own essential unity. The pressure of external opposition welded, as nothing else could have done, their loosely knitted clans into a nation. This was the historic function of the Philistines, they accomplished their task, and then vanished with startling suddenness from the stage. But the Chosen People were led on from strength to strength, till they too fulfilled their mission of teaching mankind to look forward to a time when the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as waters cover the sea."

"Thus the influence of the Philistines remains, even if indirectly, a heritage of humanity to the end of time."

XX. ABSALOM'S REBELLION

2. Sam. xviii. (Ninth Century)

The series of scenes in which Absalom plays his varied parts is regarded as one of the finest examples of simple historical narrative ; it comes from an old source and is preserved in fairly good condition. " One can say that all the narrative of the Bible shows a combination of two sets of qualities ; on the one hand it has a simplicity and a limpid vivid clearness which make it appeal to all sorts and conditions of men ; on the other hand through its whole range it has an undercurrent of earnestness and strong feeling. Thus the style clothes and transfigures even homely events with beauty and spiritual power ; and the concreteness and clearness crystallize the deep feeling expressed by the strong rhythm and the varied music of the style. These two sets of characteristics, then, the simplicity and vivid clearness on the one hand, and the earnestness and rich depth of feeling on the other, we may take as the most characteristic attributes of these narratives." [1]

This narrative is not a case of a man expressing in picturesque forms his thoughts of the world or of a story that enshrines one particular lesson, but of *real* history in a number of pictures that are full of life and movement. The author had a great subject and he knew

[1] J. H. Gardiner.

how to make the most of it. At first the characters are few, the leading figure Absalom and those who are most closely related to him and who are destined to influence his character and career come on the scene. Later he comes into more public life and meets the crowds of nameless citizens. As the climax approaches the stage is crowded and each person has his own individual attitude and style of speech. Whatever our final judgment may be, there are times when our sympathy is drawn towards this reckless son of an indulgent father. There is in the story the action of real life; the men and women play their parts with simplicity and without any theatrical show. The women are behind the scenes except one, and she is portrayed with skill and delicacy. No direct denunciation of Amnon's shameful conduct could pierce our hearts and make such a deep impression as her two pathetic appeals: "And I, whither shall I carry my shame? and as for thee thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel." "Not so, for this great wrong in putting me forth is worse than the other that thou didst unto me." Amnon, like others bent on evil courses, found a cunning counsellor, but he played the fool and in due time paid the penalty. How Absalom's career might have run its course without this tragic incident we cannot tell. He shows that he could restrain himself and act so as to evade suspicion and quietly bide his time. We may have a certain sympathy with Absalom and also a presentiment that they who take the sword will perish by the sword. The years pass by and David ceases to mourn for the dead son and begins to long for the living one. Joab, the grim warrior, who is also in his own rough way something of a courtier, will contrive means to reconcile father and son. The decree of banishment

can be revoked, but not easily can the son whose hand is stained with a brother's blood be restored to the full privilege of life at the court. Read the description of the handsome young man, his impatience and rude method of quickening Joab's action, and most vivid of all, the description of the smooth clever demagogue who seeks to steal the hearts of the men of Israel (chap. xv.). Now he takes the fatal step and unfurls the flag of revolt, the country is thrown into a state of excitement, there is hurrying to and fro, plot and counterplot. David leaves Jerusalem and it looks as if another successful rebellion had been accomplished, no strange thing in those days. But this is not the last act. David may in a measure have deserved this calamity, but there was a royalty that dwelt in him and that could not easily be crushed ; in the hour of need there flocked to his side faithful friends, able statesmen and valiant soldiers. The king may bow in a spirit of resignation that has in it a touch of fatalism, but men of the type and temper of Joab feel that their fate is still in their own hands. With the wonderful story (chaps. xvii., xviii.) before us in their appropriate English dress there is no need to attempt to summarize the rapid succession of events that sent Absalom to his doom and restored David to the throne. David in the hour when he suffers for his mistakes and sins shows piety, loyalty and chivalry ; there is a certain genuine unselfishness and tact in his handling of men that was one secret of his power. The contest of wits between Hushai and Ahithophel is really human yet specially Oriental in its character and results. Joab takes the soldier's view, will not be swayed by sentiment as he recognizes clearly that it is the very life of the kingdom that is at stake. There are other minor persons as Shimei, Ziba, Bar-

zillai, who reveal their true character in the great crisis, speak their word, and fix their future fate. If Absalom could have succeeded, the national religion might have received a serious wound and the future of the kingdom might even earlier have had to face the weakness, instability and confusion which afterwards paralyzed the power and destroyed the influence of the Northern tribes.

The Permanent Principles

The Oriental Court where the King had several wives and the succession to the throne was not settled in an orderly fashion, such a court was specially favourable to growth of rival groups with their jealous intrigues and fierce quarrels. David, a man of wonderful ability, who had built up a great kingdom, found it difficult under such circumstances to rule his own household: more than once his soul was vexed by their strife which set at variance royal justice and fatherly love. Among the children of David, Absalom stands out as a strong individuality expecting a distinguished career for himself. He comes before us in the flush of his youthful manhood, a handsome man, vain of his personal appearance and eager for popularity. There is something of the spoiled child in his temper, he has full faith in his own powers and chafes against the uncertainty and limitation of his position. It is possible to suspect that, though the provocation was great, the cruel penalty that he exacted for the outrage upon his sister sprang from mixed motives. Joab may have favoured his ambitions, and at any rate he showed great patience until the decisive hour came. Absalom played with politics in a way that seemed to him wonderfully clever in the hope of turning the hearts of men from his father,

and yet that father would have screened and spared him at the last, laying himself open to the charge that he was prepared to sacrifice his loyal people to his wilful son. The man who refused to strike a king's son can give an elaborate excuse, but Joab feels that the time for argument has gone, it is better for one man to die than that the whole nation should be thrown into confusion. And so we have the wonderful picture of the messengers from the field of battle, and the king sitting between the two gates, knowing that for him there was pain and perplexity whichever way the battle had gone. The struggle between king and father in one man's soul is given, not in any feeble comment, but in direct dramatic speech. "And the king said unto the Cushite, 'Is it well with the young man Absalom?' And the Cushite answered, 'The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise up against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.' And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son" (xviii. 32, 33).

Many reasons may be given why the young man could not be safe in that society or any other; the three most important may be stated briefly. (1) Such an overweening sense of self-importance often leads to disaster. His beauty, his popularity, his share of the limelight or his place in the sun; these seem to have been his chief concern. His showy theatrical conduct was interesting in its way, but there was lack of solid character and real strength. He had no real principle, no great message, not even any distinct sound political policy. He was not fitting himself for any useful service, he wished the

world to revolve round his personal ambitions and pleasures ; the world took him at his own valuation, for a while, a little while and then the crash came.

(2) He sinned against a fundamental law of his own time in showing a lack of reverence for age and respect for authority. To them the very essence of piety was found in reverence towards God, respect for the king, loyalty to parents, and courtesy to the man of grey hairs who has borne the burden of life. We are living in " a young man's age " and may think that these virtues were held in an exaggerated form and led to a stiff conservatism ; but a young reckless man cannot set himself with impunity against the sacred principles in which the society of his own time rests. We would not cramp the energy of youth or crush its spirit of adventure ; " Safety first," must not become a narrow selfish watchword. Let young men rejoice in their strength but let them remember that there are inexorable demands of duty, and that there is a reverence and obedience which does not forbid originality or lessen individuality.

(3) Absalom was blind to the real spiritual forces, he could not take into account the " imponderabilia," the things that cannot be weighed and counted. David was an old man, weakness had slowly crept into his rule, the kingdom seemed to be shaky, the reins ready to fall from his nerveless grasp. Criticism was probably common and there were people who were beginning to forget the glory of his earlier career. But that past was not dead, great things do not die so easily. This man had fought brave battles, displayed high qualities and created a great kingdom. In the order of Providence this kingdom was to be the medium of a great contribution to the life of the world. The strong

men are not all blind and ungrateful; in the darkest hour the golden memories begin to glow and inspire new courage. The king may say, "It is all over with me, save yourselves," but brave men reply, "Salvation for ourselves and the kingdom is only found in loyalty to thee." David was not perfect, but on the whole he had not lived for himself; he had something of the spirit of Him who "came not to be ministered unto but to minister." In contrast with the story of his great career, how tawdry and feeble is the conduct of the disloyal son who thought he could take advantage of his father's weakness, only to learn that in the hour of weakness God's heroes are made strong.

NOTE.—The following passage, the first paragraph in a novel, *The Revellers*, by Louis Tracy, may illustrate the different style of the modern writers, and also the judgment of a literary man, that the dogmatic treatment of the Bible has tended to destroy appreciation of its noble "humanism."

"And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom. Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.

"The voice of the reader was strident, his utterance uneven, his diction illiterate. Yet he concluded the eighteenth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel with an unctuous force born of long familiarity with the text. His laborious drone revealed no consciousness of the humanism of the Jewish king. To suggest that the Bible contained a mine of literature, a series of stories of surprising interest, portraying as truthfully the lives of men and women of to-day as of the nomad race which a personal God led through the wilderness, would have provoked from this man's mouth a sluggish flood of protest. The slow-moving lips set tight after each syllabic struggle, the shaggy eyebrows overhanging horn-rimmed spectacles, the beetling forehead and bull-like head sunk between massive shoulders, the very clutch of the big hands

on the Bible held stiffly at a distance, bespoke a triumphant dogmatism that found as little actuality in the heart-broken cry of David as in a description of a seven-branched candlestick."

XXI. THE ELIJAH CYCLE: YAHWEH OR BAAL

1 Kings xvii., xviii., xix., xxi. (The Eighth Century)

Apart from critical questions and interpretation of particular points, this cycle of stories immediately suggests two great truths; the power of a striking personality to leave a lasting impression upon the life of his people so as to represent a turning-point in its history, and embody the dominant idea of a particular period; and, further, the power of poetic literature to present the great idea so as to show its more than local or temporary significance, and to create for all time a type of clear faith and heroic action. Indeed in our cooler moments we are inclined to think that the fascination of the stories tends to carry us beyond the actual facts of the history and the theology of the time. "Elijah is so colossal a figure that it is impossible for ordinary mortals to do justice to his commanding stature." 1 Kings xvii.–xix. is a splendid piece of historical writing. "From the moment Yahweh answered by fire, it became evident to all who had eyes to see the signs of the times not merely that Yahweh was the God of Israel but that other gods were vanities." [1] Another distinguished scholar finds that the prophetic movement here reaches clearer self-consciousness and while "he was not zealous for an intellectual mono-

[1] Dr. A. R. Gordon: *The Prophets of the Old Testament.*

theism "—" his attitude on Carmel shows that he had reached a position that cannot be distinguished from monotheism." His theology is further explained, in words that sound rather philosophical in this connexion, " The Kingdom of God is something which stands above the empirical kingdom of Israel; its aims are not exhausted in Israel's aims, its issues are not confined to the issues of Israel's national life." [1] In a similar strain, we are told that " Elijah was among the greatest and most original of the Hebrew prophets; indeed it is in him that Hebrew prophecy first appears as a great spiritual and ethical power, deeply affecting the destiny and real character of the nation." [2] This last statement presents a peculiar view of the origin and progress of the Hebrew religion. But it shows clearly that the strong impression created by the stories abides. Elijah marches through the ages and claims rank with the highest. The Chronicler represents him as sending a " writing " to King Jehoram of Judah (2 Chron. xxi. 12); he is to be the precursor of the great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal. iv. 4); the Son of Sirach pronounces a splendid eulogy on him as, one who " stood up as fire, and whose word burned like a torch " (xlviii. 1). " In Jewish legend he often appears and disappears. A chair is set for him at the circumcision of every Jewish child. At the Paschal feast the door is set open for him to enter. All doubtful questions are left for decision until he comes again. To the Mohammedan he is known as the wonder-working and awful El Khudr." [3]

" The scholar who has applied critical methods most

[1] Professor A. C. Welch. *The Religion of Israel under the Kingdom.* [2] *Encyc. Bib.*, W. E. Addis.
[3] F. W. Farrar, *Expositor's Bible.*

thoroughly to these stories has been charged with inconsistency because from the study of these legends he can still bring such clear results." [1] "Elijah is thus a great prediction for the future. His battle against Baal, his zeal for the God of Israel, who is more than a God of Israel, are only the prelude of a powerful movement. Elijah is a mountain in the plain, from which one beholds the lofty mountain ranges. Still in his case, nothing is formulated, nothing expressed as thought, only in quite definite circumstances does he arise with definite predictions. Others must follow him, clearer, more conscious. But none of his successors have surpassed him in power of personality. Of no other prophets have histories been told which equal the legends concerning him." [2]

Before attempting a review and interpretation of the stories we may profitably consider the sober statement of a careful writer who is seeking the truth but who is conscious of the imperfection of the materials. "Elijah was the hero and leader of the reaction of which Jonadab was a symptom. Jonadab contented himself with the salvation of his own clan; Elijah preached the crusade among the people at large. From the meagre descriptions that have come down to us, we conclude that the prophet was a typical Bedawy—the man clothed in a blanket of hair. His native district was Gilead, a region where the Israelites longest retained the pastoral life. His sudden appearances and disappearances and his long desert journeys show the nomad's acquaintance with the country, its rocks and hiding places. His protest against the current religion is made known by his flight to Horeb—only here could he be sure of the effective protection of Israel's God. He believed that

[1] By R. Kittel. [2] H. Gunkel.

the Israelites in forsaking their rude primitive altars of unhewn stone, and in thronging the luxurious sanctuaries of Canaan, were really forsaking Yahweh." "For the first time perhaps it was borne home to them that Yahweh is a jealous God, who tolerates no rival in the affections of his people." [1] Here we have the view of the prophet as a conservative, who protested against new-fashioned luxuries and longed to preserve the simpler life of earlier days.

It is clear that in the olden time an important movement was regarded as something that could be summed up in the life of a great leader, around whom a group of stories were gathered, which presented, in picturesque form, the essential features of his faith and action. These stories were not written by the man himself but at a later period by nameless authors who crystallized the popular traditions and infused into them something of their own intelligence and faith. It is both foolish and futile to try to reduce, in a mechanical fashion, the event and its significance to its original sensible proportions. The way in which it has been interpreted and glorified is also a part of its history, and accounts for its influence on later ages. The great things that have come out of Israel's life and literature justify the insight of men who recognized that the thing was greater than it seemed to be at the time. The cynic would have seen merely a small tribal sectarian squabble; the poet sees the beginnings of a richer revelation, destined to enrich the life of humanity.

The Stories

If we accept the view that the story of Elijah's translation belongs to the Elisha cycle, and that the last

[1] H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*, p. 192.

characteristic word of Elijah—"Is it because there is no God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-Zebub the god of Ekron?" (2 Kings i. 3)—is followed by a later addition, the calling down of fire upon the king's messengers, "one of those imaginative apologues—abundant in the schools of the scribes—which borrowed the names of ancient heroes to lend vividness and concreteness to abstract doctrines,"[1] then we have left, 1 Kings xvii., xviii., xix., xxi.; xvii., xviii., forming a well-rounded whole, with varied incidents, beginning with the announcement that rain would be lacking for a long period, and ending with the relief of "a great rain." The distinction between historical narratives, which seek to give an orderly record of public events, and popular stories whose aim is to keep alive the memory of the great man and idealize an important movement—this distinction perhaps should not be pressed too far, but the difference between the Elijah stories and the history into which they are inserted is clear and important.

In the chapters surrounding these stories, we find a record, brief and imperfect but of the kind to which we apply the name "historical." We see kings and courtiers, politicians and prophets, playing their part. The relations, in peace and war, of Israel, Judah, Syria and Moab are brought before us. These narratives are vivid and picturesque, as may be seen in the following instances: the King's consultation with the prophets (xx. 11), when Micaiah the son of Imlah receives as the reward of his honesty "the bread of affliction and the water of affliction"; the story of Ahab's death, when his fate finds him in spite of his disguise, and faint from loss of blood he holds on to the last so that his followers may not be disheartened

[1] *H.D.B.* I, 691.

(xxii. 35), the parable in action of an unknown prophet who, like Samuel, denounces the merciful treatment of one whom Yahweh had devoted to destruction. In all these controversies and conflicts Ahab takes a leading and energetic part. Modern historians regard Ahab as a strong capable ruler, who did not view his marriage alliance with the Zidonian princess, Jezebel, as in any sense an apostasy. He links the names of his children with the names of Israel's God, he consults the regular prophets. In providing a place of worship for his foreign wife, he was following the example of earlier kings, and probably did not dream that his action would be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to destroy the religion of his own people.

The Elijah stories run parallel with this history, but do not fit closely into its framework. Here Ahab is a weakling who cowers before Elijah; who whimpers over his disappointment and leaves his strong-willed wife to find a way to gratify his base desire. There is always a certain indefiniteness in the popular stories, a great religious principle stands out boldly, though exact historical details may be lacking. They delight in bold contrasts, as that between a King who tramples on the rights of his people and the prophet who vindicates the justice of God, or between the proud representative of the Tyrian Baal and the stern man from the desert. The instinct of the story-teller is, in the deepest sense, true to the spirit of history; it is not from kings' courts that the impulse towards a purer, simpler faith has come. "The people need legends. Happy is this time, for the legends, drawn from the deeds themselves, give birth to poesy, cause the hero fully realized to appear before their eyes." [1] So splendidly has the

[1] G. Clemenceau's tribute to Guynemer.

unknown poet done his work; he has lifted his hero into a realm where cool prosaic estimates seem to be impertinent and irreverent. Such questions as the following do not trouble us in this sphere. Is the one-year famine of Phœnician tradition more correct than the three years of our story; is it likely that a king in Ahab's position would be wandering about the country seeking fodder for the cattle (xviii. 5); must we take literally the statement, "there is no nation nor kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee" (xviii. 10)? We rather rejoice that a story so simple can picture so clearly the real significance of a great conflict.

No one claims that Elijah was a literary genius who wrote the story of his own life, but the suggestion that these pictures are an "invention" of a much later time is rejected by careful scholars. "Invention" was not a gift of the Hebrew writers, their poetic instinct works on facts and traditions; besides there was no need to invent these stories long after the battle with Baal had been finally won. They may have come into existence fifty or sixty years after the time of Elijah. It was the golden age of Hebrew story-telling, and if the confusion of the time was unfavourable to large literary operations this homely genius might burn all the more brightly. Acknowledging our obligations to the commentators and "industrious winnowers of words," we leave many details to them and seek to catch the spirit of the stories.

The Famine

The famine is announced as God's judgment against apostasy (cf. 2 Sam. xxi.). The way in which it is declared gives decision on the great question, Who gives the rain and makes the land fruitful, Yahweh or

Baal? The prophet comes suddenly upon the scene; he does not rise up within the nation, like one of his successors, Amos; he comes from outside, speaks the avenging word and disappears. He finds shelter and solitude near a stream East of the Jordan, where the water was cool and refreshing. The daily diet, according to the Hebrew text, is liberal enough, "bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening." The Greek version gives, "bread in the morning and flesh in the evening"; whether this is original, or an accommodation to Exodus xvi. 8, is not certain. There is no need to linger over the alternatives "ravens," "merchants," or "Arabs" for the purpose of making the story more rational. It was meant to show that God provides for the faithful servant in ways that are wonderful. To the man who has no belief in or experience of "special Providence," it does not matter how rational you make it. That the famine is widespread is seen in the fact that the stream dries up, and the prophet must wander farther afield.

The next scene takes us to "Zarephath which belongeth to Zidon," where Elijah, by the command of his God, becomes the guest of a poor widow, who has herself been reduced to great straits (Luke iv. 26). The woman sees that he is "a man of God" by his dress and his authoritative manner of speech. It seemed a daring act of unselfishness on her part to minister to the needs of a stranger when she and her son were in such desperate case; but God does not allow such service to go without reward: "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail" (cf. 2 Kings iv. 6). This pithy statement has become a promise bringing consolation to many in their hour of need, and many a time it has received a rich fulfilment.

We have grown accustomed to the thought, so dominant in the Old Testament, that famine or other calamity is the punishment of sin. But the application of this doctrine to herself by the woman in the form that the presence of "the man of God" has brought her sin to light and caused this terrible retribution—this is a quite ancient mode of thought and has in it something mysterious and uncanny. Elijah's prayer also, according to one version, has a primitive vigour that shocks our more refined feeling; "Is there no reward for the widow with whom I have been a guest? Thou hast done evil in that Thou hast killed her son." The man of faith and prayer can wrestle powerfully with God and look calmly into the face of death.

The Conflict on Carmel

The time has come "after many days" for the prophet to reveal himself and come boldly into the presence of the king. Obadiah, the king's servant, fears that this man of mystery will vanish again and leave him to bear the brunt of the king's anger. But this time the king and the prophet meet and exchange greetings. The royal complaint, "Is it thou, thou that troublest Israel?" is met by the fierce reply, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Yahweh, and thou hast followed the Baalim." A vivid expression of the clash of ideals and interests! It is possible that some slight additions are of later origin, but, as a whole, the narrative is clear and strong.[1] "All Israel" is called to face the crucial question, "How long will ye attempt the impossible task of trying to worship two gods, bowing, in the ritual dance, with one knee to

[1] *See* 1 Kings xviii. 3, 4, 19, 31, 32.

one and one to the other?" This great picture is wonderful in its vividness and dramatic power, truthful in its spiritual suggestions, if not a literal reproduction of an actual scene. There is one man who knows his own mind, who dominates others by the simplicity of his faith and the sternness of his temper. He treats with contempt the careless spectators, and faces the foe with fierce unfaltering courage. This wild sensuous worship, this frenzied excitement is characteristic of many "heathenish" religions. The devotees lash themselves into fury, cut themselves until the blood flows freely and finally fall down in defeat and despair.

Elijah represents the stern demand that for Israel there is only one God; for any other god to expect to show his power on Israelite soil is an absurdity that justifies the bitterest sarcasm. The idea of the relation of a god to his own land is one of the fundamental ideas of those days (2 Kings x. 19; xvii. 26). It was held by Phœnicians as well as Israelites and that is one of the strongest reasons that make it difficult to think that these prophets of Baal would accept a challenge that placed them at such a disadvantage. Separated from their own soil their god could not show his full strength. So, what is pictured here is a national movement, a stage in the conflict with heathenism that had, under different circumstances, its counterpart in Judah. The battle was long and slow, probably it had dramatic moments and spectacular scenes, but there was always something deeper, it meant a purifying of religious belief in the minds of thoughtful men. Religion cannot be kept in the realm of pure thought and reverent worship, but the tragedy in the life of N. Israel is that the religious conflict became so completely confused with the strife of political factions. In 2 Kings x. we

are told that it was Jehu, who, incited by Elisha to start a political revolution, gathered the priests and worshippers of Baal into one temple and by *cunning* as well as cruelty compassed their destruction. Events of that kind, on a larger scale, have happened many times in the history of the world; men learn slowly that the settlement of religious questions in that brutal fashion is no solution of the delicate problem. It leaves a wound that is not soon healed and causes sorrow for later generations. "And Yahweh said unto him, call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. And it shall come to pass at that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." (Hos. i. 4). It is true that vengeance comes upon evil-doers, but it is also true that those who think that they are its divinely appointed ministers often forget the dangers that attend their conduct. Because its religious zeal took such crude forms, because the national life became the sport of factions, because men came to regard the dagger of the assassin as God's chosen instrument, Israel, through successive crises, plunged madly to its ruin. The scanty remnants of its noblest life and literature had to be preserved for us by the smaller, more stable kingdom of Judah.

The Moral Protest. Chap. xxi.

In the Greek version there is a different arrangement —this chapter is numbered xx., that is, it comes before, not after, Ahab's defeat of Benhadad's army. The order of the Hebrew and English may have been chosen on account of the desire to place the prediction and its fulfilment (xxii.) side by side, while it was felt that the

narrative of Ahab's victory did not suit very well immediately after the prediction of misfortune. The story is fresh and living, such questions—as how far diffuseness at some points is accounted for by later additions; whether tradition varies as to the place of the vineyard, Jezreel or Samaria; is the postponement of the terrible retribution until after Ahab's death a modification of the actual prediction or a reflection of later history?—these need not detain us, as our supreme concern is with the fact that the prophet appears as a vindicator of common right against royal tyranny. Ahab is depicted as a colourless kind of creature, dominated now by Elijah, now by his wife. Jezebel shows the power of a strong determined woman who is just as fierce and intolerant in temper as the prophet. There is no doubt truth in the implication that in her nation and religion the autocratic principle had freer play, while the Hebrew people watched with suspicion the increasing power of their ruler. It was the restlessness caused by Solomon's luxury and despotism that led to the revolt by which the Northern Kingdom was founded. The prophets had no democratic theory, but they utterly rejected the right of kings to do wrong. If the king is lacking in personal conscience God will provide a living voice to rebuke the lawlessness of the man, who, by his very office, ought to be the highest representative of justice. In similar fashion Nathan confronted an even more powerful king (2 Sam. xii.). "Similar incidents are common enough in the lives of absolute monarchs. The peculiarity of this one is the fidelity with which the moral sense of the community asserted itself in the rebuke by the prophet." [1] These words spoken of David's sin are true also of Ahab's

[1] Dr. H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*, p. 148.

transgression; one sin leads to another, the culprit seeks to wash out his guilt by the blood of the innocent victim. We can understand Ahab's covetousness, that is a common human failing; we can sympathize with Naboth's sentiment, wishing to keep his ancestral home and refusing to be tempted by the hope of material gain. When these two clash through unscrupulous self-will and tyranny, then comes the tragedy with far-reaching results. Such tragedies happened often in lands ruled by selfish despots, but it is the glory of our Bible that it shows them in all their contemptible meanness, by throwing upon them the light of the eternal righteousness. The story of Elijah's life becomes a symbol of the larger movement of which it formed a part, by this very thing that it joins the theological idea and the moral feeling; that Israel's God is one and that a god of justice must be recognized both by kings and people, these are two sides of one great truth. "And thus religion and morality which had an independent origin became the one as regards the relations between God and man and the other the relations between man and man, the one stretching from earth to heaven, the other crawling on the ground, have after many attempts at union even on the part of the rudest of religions at last become bound together and morality has become as it were the handmaid of religion." [1] Elijah is not the type of man who discusses theology and morality in abstract fashion with philosophic words, but he stands and plays his part in the long line of noble souls who by their response to the divine light, made it possible for a disciple of the prophets, four hundred years later, to summarize their teaching in the short splendid statement, "He hath

[1] *Religion and Art*, 399.

shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8).

The Weary Prophet.[1] Chap. xix.

This chapter is a wonderful piece of literature; whether originally connected with the other stories or not it forms a noble conclusion to the prophet's career, suggesting that though the mighty hero must leave the stage others will arise to play their parts and carry on the great work. The reaction after a great effort, the moment of weakness in a strong man's life, the heavy depression that settles on the spirit when the body is overstrained and food and rest neglected, the pathetic cry for the relief that death alone can give, these points are brought before us by a few graphic strokes. Then, by kindly sleep and angelic ministry, the prophet is prepared for the long journey to the sacred mountain, where he can come into close communion with his God. The Greek version has at the beginning the words, "If thou art Elijah then I am Jezebel." This may be "an ornamental addition," but it is in the spirit of the story, which sets these two strong personalities in direct opposition to each other. The Greek "he feared" instead of "he saw" is probably correct, the later punctuators found it hard to believe that "the prophet of fire" could yield to fear. "The juniper tree" in verse 4 can be dispensed with though it need not cause any controversy. Verses 9b–11a are more important, but they certainly look like a duplication; the best Hebrew stories avoid such repetitions. It has been said that the significance of the vision is destroyed if Yahweh gave privately beforehand the message that was to be

[1] *See* F. W. Robertson's noble discourse.

given at the critical moment. It is scarcely a sufficient reply to say that one is the mental working of the word within him and the other the objective appearance outside him. That distinction is more suitable to a modern philosopher than an ancient story-teller. There is no need to find trouble in verse 15, as if the future events were to happen in this exact order, the popular story always has this indefiniteness giving the spirit rather than the precise form of the history.

These may seem to be peddling questions which should not be allowed to come between us and a great picture, but it is just because the picture is so great that it needs and can bear such careful scrutiny. The rebuke of the prophet, who in his fiery zeal thinks that he stands alone, enshrines an everlasting lesson. Many a prophet has stood against the world of his day, but not absolutely alone or his virtue and his message would have perished with him. Nothing passes through a vacuum ; it is through the warm atmosphere created by the sympathy and prayers of nameless believers that the great words of the past come to us and help to keep alive our feebler faith.

God provides a successor for the great prophet, a man who leaves his home when touched by the magic mantle and summoned by an appeal that throws all the responsibility upon himself. Not by human constraint or persuasion must a man enter the prophetic order, not by any hope of gain or reputation must he be attracted. Unless a spiritual impulse has reached his soul and made him feel that though free he is under a great constraint he had better stay on the farm and show his piety in homely duties and family relationships. The successor, as often is the case, is of a different type ; we find him in courts and camps, he is drawn into the

political intrigues and military conflicts. Story-tellers have been at work on his career, but have not been able to reach the sublime simplicity and power of the Elijah narratives.

The most difficult question of all to answer, one indeed that is all the more stimulating because it can receive no definite dogmatic answer, is this; what lesson are we to draw from the revelation that Elijah received at Horeb? Some lessons we have clearly discerned, but what is the precise significance of "the still small voice," or "the sound soft and gentle"? The phrase is difficult to translate and it has suggested to some the sweet gentle breeze that comes when a violent explosion of nature has cleared the air. We are accustomed to draw lessons from the fact, proved by careful continued observations, that in nature and in human life the gentle forces though not so sensational are the most pervasive and powerful. That may be a legitimate suggestion to us, but we can scarcely carry it back to those distant days. Besides it does not harmonize very well with the spirit in which Elijah's work was to be continued, verse 17. It is not Elijah's fiery zeal but his failing faith that is rebuked. It has been suggested that here we have a stage between the storm God closely linked to Nature and the transcendent God of later theology. "The scene shows at the same time that it is far from regarding Yahweh as a pure storm god, a mere power of Nature; on the contrary, God and Nature are strictly separated from each other, Yahweh is not in the storm and earthquake but follows them and is accompanied by them as satellites of his majestic divine sublimity"[1] (Judges v. 4; Hab. iii. 10, 11).

Seeing that this picture was drawn when Elijah had

[1] Kittel.

passed from the scene, and the effect of his fierce protest had begun to be seen in the turbulent life of Israel that followed Ahab's reign, is it possible that some gentle thoughtful soul had been moved to suggest that the storms in Israel were not altogether of God's sending? This was clear to Hosea probably less than a century later, and the thought may have been there before the expression of it was wrung from his broken heart. It may be said that this is mere speculation which can lead to no definite result, and while that is true, it shows the stimulating suggestive nature of the story-form which gives us living pictures of strong men facing great problems in a dim light. Straining their eyes towards the larger vision of the future, the writers of these stories, brooding over political confusions and national disasters, sought to express the failure of the present and at the same time to hold fast to their faith in a living righteous God, who brings order out of chaos and light out of darkness. Certainly the lesson that brute force cannot solve spiritual problems is a great one; though it may be found often on the pages of history, the world is slow to learn its full significance.

XXII. RUTH: A WOMAN'S FAITHFULNESS AND ITS REWARD

The Purpose of the Book

This short story has called forth the highest praise from the most competent critics for its simple beautiful presentation of scenes from the rural life of ancient Israel. It is artistic in the noblest sense, though it is not likely that in those days there was much consciousness of art or discussion as to the technique of story-telling. A charming story, appointed by the Jewish Church to be read at Pentecost, because of its association with the harvest; it seems to shine in its own light and to need little in the way of amplification or interpretation. "At first sight one would say that there is nothing simpler in the whole Bible and that calls less for the help of the scholar to bring it within the range of those who have less learning. With the exception of certain customs that are foreign to our mode of thinking, but with regard to which we have ample instruction, all is clear and at the same time charming, so there is no need to bring our eloquence into play to emphasize this quality. However, one is rudely brought to a stop by the first impression that the recital cannot fail to produce. By a preconception that one might call instinctive men have been led to seek in it something else, and more than the text seemed to give. Naturally in seeking this

supposed inner thought of the author, different routes have been followed, and the result has been that there exist on this piece, one of the shortest in Hebrew literature, and in appearance the least obscure, as many and more divergent interpretations than on many another, which is of larger size, and that shows more serious difficulties."[1] This graceful writer then adds, on his own account, another ingenious solution of the problem. Fortunately the story itself has not been touched or that might have happened which Dr. Frazer claims has taken place in other cases. "A tincture of ethical theory infused into the magic glass of old romance can precipitate the prismatic lines of poetry into a powder of grey matter at the bottom."

1. It was difficult for men dominated by a hard legal system to appreciate the simple beauty of the story. It was explained by Jewish scholars that the bereavement came as a punishment for the mixed marriages; Orpah is taken to mean "stiff-necked," "apostate"; the mighty man of wealth or valour, becomes "a man strong in the law." The fact that the story was "unconventional" was regarded as proof that the Holy Spirit meant that the reader should seek for hidden meanings. Pagan humanity was here asked to submit itself to the God of Israel and by allying itself with Israel prepare the way for the coming Christ.

2. Even more repulsive to the reverent student is the sentimental appreciation, when the followers of Rousseau regarded this story as the prototype of pastoral poetry and went into rapture over the idyllic calm and sweetness of rural life. They admired the delicate perfumes exhaled by the rustic scenes; they

[1] Reuss, *La Bible*, vii. 18.

manifested real or affected enthusiasm for the primitive manners and simple family life. It may be that behind this there was "a morbid sentiment, an insipid taste coquetting with imaginary perfections, and without the least trace of the virile sympathy of the original"; but perhaps there is something pathetic in the attempt of polished courtiers and dainty ladies, just before the French Revolution, trying to understand a simple antique world, so far away in style and spirit from their own.

3. It is not such a great leap to the view of a modern expositor that the story may have been written in the time of Solomon, as a protest against the increasing luxuries and pomp of his reign. "Moriah was now the centre of a great priestly system, and from temple and palace the national, and to a great extent the personal life of Israelites was influenced, not in every respect for good. The quiet suggestion is here made that the artificiality and pomp of the kingdom did not compare well with that old time when the affairs of an ancestress of the splendid monarch were settled by a gathering at the village gate."[1]

The following "solutions" may be mentioned, as briefly as possible. (1) Reuss, making Ephrathite mean Ephraimite, a very doubtful suggestion, thought that the book was meant to show that the son of Jesse had rights of inheritance in Israel, and so to present a plea for the union of the lost tribes under the Judean monarchy. (2) That the story is meant to fill up a gap in the line of David's ancestry and incidentally to remind its readers of the duty of the next of kin to perpetuate the name and family of one who has died childless. (3) It is a tendency story, written

[1] *Expositor's Bible*, 1889.

after the Exile, to counteract the bitter opposition to mixed marriages, and to inspire a larger, more tolerant spirit than that which was shown, in this regard, by Ezra and Nehemiah. (4) One of the latest expositors places it in the final period of the Jewish monarchy, and after a genial delicate review of the whole situation comes to this conclusion, "The chief motive of the Ruth-Story is the heroism of the loyal wife who finds her God-given reward. From love of the dead and the family into which she has passed by marriage, Ruth conquers all difficulties that stand in her way, in order that she may gain an inheritance for her husband." "The narrator desires nothing more than to tell the story and to give pleasure, and even now the receptive heart will rejoice in the beauty of a simple tale bathed in the delicate fragrance of poetry." [1]

The Story

This variety of opinions may well create doubts as to whether the author ever meant to write a polemical tract, or to veil any didactic purpose behind the beautiful story. It is thoroughly rooted in the soil of the small country and antique time. Even without direct preaching it has a real religious atmosphere; it breathes a wholesome spirit of piety, a faith in God's guidance, and an air of resignation in which patience is united with dignity. Here, as elsewhere, the spirit of revolt which leads men to curse the grim realities of life and to rage with impotent fury against the futile fate of suffering mortals, is conspicuous by its absence.[2] "The happy ending" is sober, untouched by youthful feverish romance, but

[1] Gressmann.

[2] Cf. Gen. iii. and Job i. 20; ii. 10.

it expresses a faith which had to contend with hard facts. Such facts were always present, in Israel's long troubled history it is difficult to find a situation that will account for the story simply by its quietness; the peacefulness of the story springs from the soul and not from circumstances. There are signs of relatively late date; the one most relevant to our present subject is the fact that, apart from the genealogy (cf. 1 Chron. ii. 19), it is a perfect unity, all its parts woven delicately together, not demanding analysis nor provoking discussions as to its structure. Further, as compared with the more ancient types, it shows an advance in the art of story-telling, though still far away from the diffuse descriptions and minute psychology of modern writers. In the earliest days, the stories were short, the longer story was made by piecing together separate scenes and stories. Here there is a real story, a picture of life with light and shade, a movement that goes steadily to its goal but not always at the same speed. The scenes grow out of, and merge naturally into each other. The play upon names and the interest in ancient customs continues. If we can still speak of its frankness, its freedom from both the prurient and the prudish, we must also note a growth in refinement of feeling and delicacy of representation (cf. Gen. xxxviii.).

To tell the story over again would certainly be an attempt "to paint the lily and gild refined gold." It is made out of the common stuff of human experience—privation through failure of crops, migration because it may be better to live elsewhere than to perish in one's own home, the crushing weight of successive blows of sorrow, the humiliation of facing old friends with the burden of complete failure—all

these elements spell tragedy, but it is so softened by an atmosphere of natural piety that men have been constrained to call it idyllic. Leaving to the imagination, stimulated by the ancient writer, the scenes in the harvest-field, the communion of the lonely women in their poverty-stricken home, and the meeting of elders at the gate, we dwell with gratitude upon the loyalty of Ruth to her dead husband and her mother-in-law. The mode in which this fine feeling is expressed suits the customs of those times, but its spirit is appropriate to all forms of society. Orpah's action was quite natural, when, with a friendly kiss, she bade her mother-in-law good-bye and departed to dwell with her own people. But, while it is not a question of right or law, we feel that Ruth chose the better part when she yielded to the impulse of love and ventured forth into the unknown, as the companion of a friendless woman. The bond of true friendship is not to be lightly broken; it is glorified when the young woman can say: "We have nothing now but each other, and even death shall not divide us, we can at least lie in the same grave." If this is not theological it is religious, which is something broader and deeper; and her words have gained a mystic sacred meaning for all time.

Intreat me not to leave thee:
And to return from following thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
Thy people (shall be) my people, and thy God my God;
Where thou diest I will die, and there will I be buried;
Yahweh do so to me, and more also,
If aught but death part thee and me.

XXIII. THE STORY OF JOB: THE PROBLEM OF SUFFERING

The apostle James says, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and we have seen the end of the Lord, and that the Lord is full of pity and merciful" (v. 11). As a matter of fact, that is what the people did know in connexion with Job, his patience or endurance. The volcanic outbursts, the keen satire, the passionate appeals of the great speeches have left little impression on the New Testament, and have never been the subjects of popular study. The sudden change from perfect resignation, expressed in the words, "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" to the bitter cry, "Let the day perish in which I was born," demands an explanation psychological or literary. The theory that the popular story is the original stratum of the book, and that some part has been sacrificed to make room for the splendid poems, seems highly probable, though it is not susceptible of absolute proof. In that case, "the happy ending" survived, as a concession to the sacredness of tradition and the needs of simple faith. Those who come into real contact with the great controversy and feel the throb of passion behind the fierce wrestlings of the chief speaker, cannot escape the impression that "the epilogue" is a descent to a conventional level.

This simple picturesque narrative has some of the finest qualities of Hebrew prose and is poetic in spirit, though it only assumes the metrical form at certain critical moments. There is quick movement and vivid descriptive power. A competent and sympathetic student of Hebrew language and literature says, "There is a certain breathlessness about the narrative which describes the cruel impetuosity of Satan's assault upon the fortunes of Job, and the unrelenting thoroughness with which the overthrow was accomplished."

"While *he* was yet speaking another came and said. . . ." Scarcely had one blow fallen, when another and more terrible is delivered. Satan is determined to strip Job without warning, without mercy, and without delay, of all that makes it worth his while to be good; and to ensure his ruin, the forces alike of earth and heaven are summoned—not only the robber tribes of the desert, but the very lightning, *the fire of God from heaven*, and the mighty rushing wind that comes up from the desert. The calamities may be natural in their kind, but they are supernatural in their intensity and in the rapidity of their succession, for was there ever lightning that consumed seven thousand sheep at one stroke? It seemed as if the powers of the universe were leagued against Job, to tear from him not only all he had, but all that he loved, for those happy sons and daughters, whom we last saw feasting in their elder brother's house, are now lying dead among its ruins." [1]

The story not only has a swift steady movement, it has an artistic arrangement, the scenes on earth and

[1] Dr. J. E. McFadyen, *The Problem of Pain*, pp. 19 f. For a comparison and contrast *see* "A Babylonian Job," Barton, *Archæology and The Bible*, p. 392.

in heaven being skilfully set, as counterparts, over against each other ; the striking culminating passages are in verse form. It belongs to a cultivated age, and probably to a time of comparative peace when sudden calamities were the exception. The speeches, on the other hand, by common consent of modern scholars, reflect the temper of a period when national hopes had been crushed, and the problem of the suffering of a righteous man or nation was acute. There was a revolt against the narrow dogma that traced all suffering to sin. It is an individual example, there is more personal passion than patriotic feeling, but it is all the stronger that it fits so well into the national background.

" Moreover, though Job be an individual, he is more than an individual. The national history reflects itself in his, and his restoration, if it was to set forth that of the people, must be to worldly prosperity " (A. B. Davidson). We may recognize the truth of this statement, even if we cannot use it as an argument for the unity of the book.

The names " Job " and " Uz," of uncertain meaning, may come from tradition and from a simpler story of the patient trustful man, who after patient endurance received final vindication and blessing. The region of Edom, the home of wise men, is indicated as the scene of the story, but on these points there is an indefiniteness, here as elsewhere, for the chief concern of the popular story is not with history or geography, but with the religious teaching. The contribution of this section of the book to the problem of suffering is the thought that men need to be tested, even as God did test Abraham, so that it may be proved that disinterested piety is a possible achievement. The words of

another poet illustrate nobly this element of a strong living faith:

> For though the fig-tree shall not blossom,
> Neither shall fruit be on the vine;
> The labour of the olives shall fail,
> And the fields shall yield no meat,
> The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
> And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
> Yet I will rejoice in Yahweh,
> I will joy in the God of my salvation.
>
> (Hab. iii. 17 ff.)

This is a magnificent expression of faith, a triumphant declaration of the soul's victory over circumstances, but the situation had also to be faced in hours of dark depression. The question, "What doth it profit a man?" may, in our exalted moods, seem to be on a low level, but in those days it was pressing and persistent (Mal. iii. 14; Eccles. iii. 9; for the approach from the opposite direction *see* Mark viii. 36).

The story is well preserved. The word translated "curse" has caused much discussion (i. 5; ii. 11-9), as the usual meaning of the Hebrew word is "bless" or "salute"; it has been maintained that the change has been deliberately made by later scribes, who could not tolerate the phrase "curse God" on the page of the sacred book. But the use of the milder word in this sense may have been possible at an earlier date (cf. 1 Kings xx. 10), or the word "bless" may have acquired the sense "say good-bye to," "renounce" (Ps. x. 3). The precise origin of the cynical proverb—Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life—may be uncertain, but the meaning is clear, and while it professes to cut deep into pious pretence, it

merely reveals the shallow nature and cynical spirit of him who utters it.

The representation of the heavenly council is not new, but here it is described more fully (Isa. vi.; 1 Kings xx. 19; Jer. xxiii. 18; Ps. lxxxix. 8). The figure of *the* Satan or adversary is defined, not as a tempter, but as a critic who demands the severest tests and clearest proofs of human piety. The word "satan" is not here or in Zechariah iii. a proper name, it is not until 1 Chronicles xxi. 1 that it attains that distinction, and there Satan is a *tempter* and not merely an *accuser* (cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. 1). A still later development of the Satan-idea after the close of the Old Testament Canon, is "The Devil," a spiritual prince, at the head of all the evil forces of the world. This story stands on the earlier ground of a simple monotheism where the absolute supremacy of Israel's God is maintained. There is no real dualism; there may be evil spirits, but they are under the complete control of Yahweh, who takes full responsibility for the good and evil that comes upon men. The tempter in Genesis iii. is a subtle beast, one of the creatures, any mythological reminiscence having in the meantime vanished, under the influence of Hebrew religion, but much later "the old serpent" reappears as "Satan" (Rev. iii. 9; xii. 9; xx. 2), and now he has gained "a seat," "a synagogue," and "deep things" of his own. Thus in our examination of a simple story, unless we are careful, we drift away from appreciation of the story itself into the current of theological development.

When the age of abstract speculation comes the simple stories tend to pass away. The burden of complex problems and the weight of The Law is more

than they can bear. The idyllic picture of Ruth and Naomi preserves something of the antique flavour; but the elaborate polemic of Esther, with its fiery vindictive nationalism, shows a culture of a more imposing but less attractive type. Here, also, the problem of suffering has demanded a larger space, a freer discussion, a bolder treatment; and upon the short popular story there has been placed one of the world's greatest dramatic poems. But whether it is story or song, it is the everlasting question of man's duty and destiny; his relation to God and his fellow-men.

XXIV. NEHEMIAH: THE PATRIOT: THE BEGINNING OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

"Ezra" and "Nehemiah" appear to have originally formed one book; they do not claim to have been written by the men whose names they bear, but the original memoirs of these two notable men have evidently been used by a compiler. The view generally held now is that this compiler is the author of the Chronicles. "The repetition of the concluding passage of 2 Chronicles as the introduction to Ezra is an indication that the latter was intended to be a continuation of the Chronicler's version of the History of Israel. When we compare the two works together we come across many indications of their agreement in spirit and style. In both we discover a disposition to hurry over secular affairs in order to dilate on the religious aspects of history. In both we meet with the same exalted estimation of The Law, the same unwearied interest in the details of temple ritual and especially in the musical arrangements of The Levites, and the same singular fascination for long lists of names, which are inserted wherever an opportunity for letting them in can be found.[1] This means that in our Old Testament we have a second large document (Chronicles i. and ii., Ezra and Nehemiah), which in a certain fashion covers the time from Adam to the Persian

[1] Adeney, *Exp. B.* *See* Introd. on the original historical documents.

period. The portion dealing with the pre-Davidic age cannot be called history, as it is little more than a list of names; but already the peculiar style and spirit of the Chronicler can be discerned. This great work arose early in the Greek period; that is, before the beginning of the third century B.C. It represents the toil of scholars in Jerusalem who were devoted to the temple-service and who in the spirit of their times worked over the material at their disposal. As we have seen, the first attempts at history and biography were in the form of short stories, and then of collections of such stories, without definite interpretation, except that things placed side by side tend to interpret each other. The prophets revealed the presence of God in life and history. This was not a dogma or philosophy so much as a God-given vision. When the prophetic revelation becomes part of common thought and practical life, it loses something of its flexibility in becoming a formula. The great Deuteronomic preacher glories in the guidance of God in the history of his people (chap. viii.), but the writers of that school tended to give ritual an equal place with goodness and to set up an ecclesiastical standard for the judgment of the past that forgot the simplicity and freedom of earlier days. From that spirit stories may arise that are not reflections of facts but the expression of theological ideas (cf. 1 Sam. viii.; Judges ii. 6 ff.).

In the Chronicles this influence grows and the process moves on. It is not our present business to enumerate the sources, earlier and later, upon which this great work is based, but simply to indicate the spirit in which they are used. The Aramaic documents and the genealogies are interesting material for special students; the Ezra-Nehemiah memoirs are fresh and living for

all of us; it is in his treatment of the earlier Deuteronomic history that the peculiarity of the Chronicler comes out most clearly. Though so much material is literally carried over from the ancient sources the result is very largely to transform it from general into Church history. The religious interest was always strong in Hebrew history, but now what we call the ecclesiastical attitude and tone is supreme. It is also specifically Jewish: "But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect with Yahweh all his days" (1 Kings xv. 14). "But the high places were not taken away *out of Israel*, nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days" (2 Chron. xv. 17). Jehoshaphat the King of Judah is glorified, but it is suggested that an alliance with Israel was sinful and dangerous (2 Chron. xviii.; xx. 35 ff.). Judah has always had the right ideal of worship, but Israel's apostasy needs to be wiped from the pages of history.

A typical transformation is seen in the treatment of David which Wellhausen has expressed with his usual keenness. "What has the Chronicler made of David? The founder of the kingdom has become the founder of the temple and its worship; the king and hero at the head of his company of warriors has become the cantor and liturgist at the head of a swarm of priests and Levites, his clearly sketched figure changed into a dull image of a saint surrounded by a cloud of incense" (cf. 1 Chron. xv. ff., and note the silence regarding David's great sin and the omission of the splendid story of Absalom's rebellion). It is true that this can be understood as a natural development, when we remember all the circumstances, the small area to which the country was reduced, the

concentration of nearly all its life in Jerusalem, the fierce struggle to fortify the city and build the temple, the bitter conflict for the observance of the Law and the exclusive policy necessary to preserve the life of Judaism.

We need to remember that these changes in the view of the past took place slowly and gradually, so that writers at different stages were not conscious of inventing anything new. The truth that they expressed is a permanent one, though the form of presentation varies, viz. that the roots of their religion ran into the remote past, and that great personalities as Moses and David had left an abiding influence and possessed an everlasting significance. Examining the matter and form of the Chronicler's history when it leaves the original sources we have to admit that, as in the account of Jehoshaphat's wonderful victory (2 Chron. xx.), it has more the appearance of the sermon than of the vivid picturesque stories in which the real battles of earlier times are enshrined.

The New Autobiography

We are not surprised then that many regard the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah as pleasant oases in a dreary desert of second-hand artificial chronicles. We are not now concerned with Ezra the great scribe; he did a great work and has been duly celebrated in history and legend. It was natural that he should become the great hero, the superman of Rabbinic Judaism. Neither can we discuss the relation of the work of these two men, upon which much critical labour has been spent in recent years. The great work could not have been carried out by either of them alone. What we are concerned with is the living

power of Nehemiah's story of *his own life*. We see that when, once more, a great man comes on the scene and frankly takes us into his confidence regarding his hopes and fears, his motives and experiences, then the story is vivid, fascinating, inspiring. It is claimed that here is a new form in Biblical literature, a man's own account of his labours in the cause of his country and his God, what we call "autobiography." The fresh living stream wells up again because we are face to face with a real man who has willingly undertaken a hard task and wrestles fiercely with tremendous difficulties.

"That men should record or cause to be recorded the events of their own lives, in the Orient was not unusual thousands of years before Israelite literature arose. Assyrian kings relate in the first person in their bombastic inscriptions their wars and triumphs. Egyptian grave-chambers and temple walls place before our eyes in pictures the life of the dead even unto daily details; the biographies sometimes added are also written here in the first person and, as the grave-paintings themselves, are the work of the one who beforehand had prepared such a grave for himself. The pressure to defy the perishable, to hand down to posterity a witness from his life and work, belongs to the original feelings of mankind. It harmonizes with this origin of autobiography that, in ancient as well as in recent days, self-glory is excessive. In such a biography on an Egyptian grave it is said, 'My glory reaches to the heavens.'"[1] The author finds that biography and autobiography spring up in Israel from a different root, and without pressing the distinction too hard, there seems to be some reason for that

[1] H. Schmidt.

contention. Religion, which played such a great part in all spheres, is also powerfully at work here. The prophets speak of their visions and their works not as something that proves their ability and reflects their own glory, but as the gift of God, the revelation of His will, the manifestation of His mercy. From this comes the growth of individuality and the recognition, in the fuller sense, of personality. After the brief notes of earlier prophets, Baruch, the secretary of Jeremiah, makes a more systematic attempt at biography, and now we meet a man who gives a clear account of his supreme purpose, and sketches for us his own life work.

Nehemiah: The Patriot

The Exile and his love for Jerusalem. It is not possible to tell the story better than in his own words; the man reveals himself clearly in the simple, honest account of his experience. The community at Jerusalem was in great difficulties, there was disappointment of high hopes, poverty of present resources, division within and opposition without. It has been said that "humanly speaking the Kingdom of God hung from the swordbelt of the Persian *gens d'armes*." And it is true that in the wide embrace of the Persian Empire the small community had a measure of liberty and protection, was free from political entanglements and able to give its energy to religious questions, but those questions often brought internal strife and intensified the jealousy of envious neighbours. Then it was seen that the children of Zion scattered throughout the world had not forgotten her (Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6). Her life was reinforced from Babylon, Persia, and possibly from Egypt. Nehemiah, a palace-servant at

Susa, an Elamite city, learns from relatives and friends of the sad condition of affairs in Jerusalem. He is successful and comfortable in the foreign country and has gained the confidence of its rulers, but to the Hebrew patriotism and religion were close akin, and the picture of Jerusalem in distress brings sorrow to his heart and tears to his eyes. These are not "idle tears"; the tears of a strong man are prophetic of heroic action. Next comes prayer; laying the case before his God, he offers his confession and petition to the God of heaven, largely in Biblical language, believing that to the willing soul the way to service will be opened. He does not hide his grief from the king, though those who come into the presence of Kings are expected to be cheerful, with no sign of the world's distress upon them. Blessed with the royal favour, with substantial support, he sets out for the sacred city, and the news of his coming is not pleasant to the enemies of the Jews. So he came to Jerusalem and was there three days, surely not too long a time to rest after a long toilsome journey. By night he surveys the scene and then brings its seriousness before the people so that they say: "Let us arise and build." Confronted by jealous neighbours, who charge him with rebellion, he gives the watchword of his career, loyalty to Jerusalem, uncompromising opposition to the enemies of Zion. "The God of heaven he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem."

A Strong Man and his Stern Work. Nehemiah was a man who knew what he wanted to do and was determined to do it. He met all forms of opposition in the same courageous spirit; the weakness and

vacillation of his own people, the harassing opposition of enemies, and the sharp ridicule which is often a most powerful weapon. He was not to be drawn into useless conference; what is the use of talking it over with men who are seeking to do mischief? "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, while I leave it, and come down to you?" When he repeats this four times surely they will understand. Even a prophet's plea that he will take care of himself does not avail: "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, being such as I, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." I will, I will not, rings through all his speeches. He organizes the people for the defence of the city and the building of the walls, asking that each render the kind of substance and service within his power. There is something of the old prophetic spirit in his violent attack upon the usurers and land-grabbers who had preyed upon the misfortunes of the poor (chap. v.). They built the wall because of his organizing ability and inspiring influence; for when he showed them the way "the people had a mind to work." If men would not keep the Sabbath he preached a powerful sermon to them, but also threatened "to lay hands on them." To us there may seem to be a pitiless cruelty about the way in which he enforced the law against mixed marriages, and we may detect a Pharisaic tone in his closing words: "Thus I cleansed them from all strangers, and appointed wards for the priests and for the Levites, every one in his work; and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good." But it is the story of a strong man who did an important task in

dark days, when weakness and indifference would have been fatal. To us there is surely a living interest in the way in which he tells his own tale, showing no mock modesty but a calm self-confidence in himself and his mission. To him the supreme thing was that Jerusalem should become the centre of pure worship and noble life, so that the God of his fathers should be glorified.

XXV. THE STORY OF JONAH: A PROPHETIC SATIRE

(350 B.C.)

It is strange that in the so-called "Book of the Twelve" there should be one that is pure narrative, and that in its form has nothing in common with the prophetic and apocalyptic writings of this collection. Apart from the Psalm in the second chapter, evidently an interpolation, it is a brief narrative told in a lively effective style. Whatever may be the significance of its present position, probably suggesting lateness of origin, we are thankful to possess it. Accepting the common view of its post-exilic origin, we learn that the art of graceful narrative survived to some extent in the reflective, scholastic period of Judaism. It is more important to understand its teaching and catch its spirit than to settle precisely the particular literary species to which it belongs. To speak of it as "a prophetic epic" seems to be rather a generous use of the word "epic." It is a didactic narrative, a story with a purpose, but as it is not a formal tract, a great variety of lessons may be drawn from it, and there may be slight differences of opinion as to which of these we assign the supreme place. A recent writer,[1] speaking of Francis Thompson, says, in a fine suggestive style, "The poet had sought to escape God in God's own world, and, naturally, had

[1] R. E. Moulton. Dr. Trevor Davies.

failed. He is like the prophet in that little-understood book of our sacred Scriptures, who thought to put the seas between him and Jehovah, but found Him walking on the waters; who imagined that human life outside Israel would be a secure hiding place, but found Him in the kindness of untutored sailors, and in the penitent people of Nineveh; and who, when he turned in bitterness to the labyrinthine ways of his own mind, heard even there the voice, 'Doest thou well to be angry, Jonah?'" This is certainly true to the spirit of the book, however blind the Jonah of the story may have been to such great lessons.

The author of *Folk Lore in the Old Testament* tells the first half of the story, in his own brilliant style, and then says, "With this picturesque narrative we may compare a less artistic but equally vigorous story told by the natives of Windesi, on the Northern coast of Dutch New Guinea." Then follows the story of five natives "canoe and all" swallowed by a whale, but we cannot regard such a story as in any sense "a parallel" to our small book. The question whether "the great fish" had originally a mythological origin may be, in this case, avoided without serious loss, as it is so remote that it has no real bearing upon the interpretation of the story. The striking passage, "Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, hath devoured me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his maw with my delicates, he hath cast me out" (Jer. li. 34), might suggest an allegory with a national application; in that case Jonah would be a type of Israel refusing to face its world-mission; but, tempting as this may seem, it is uncertain. It has been said that the tragedy of the book is precisely this, that so much serious discussion, as well as light frivolous

banter, has been spent upon a quite subordinate feature, a mere illustration, with the effect of diverting attention from its great appeal. We are glad then to dispense with arguments as to the swallowing capacity of whales and sharks, and there is no need here for subtle discussion on the "natural" and the "supernatural" in human life.

It is clearly a bright beautiful story; even if it lacks the genuine antique flavour, it is not "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" to such an extent as to lose the charm of real narrative. If we admit that it is "a story with a purpose," the fact that the supreme purpose is not self-evident may show the power of the writer to blend his teaching with his narrative, so that while it may contain a sermon, it remains a real story. If it is a defence of the missionary spirit, and a protest against national narrowness, it takes the form of a gentle satire directed against a false conception of the prophet's work, at a time when the earlier type of prophet had passed away and mechanical views as to the nature of prophecy had begun to prevail.

The Jonah of this book is certainly not a prophet in the true sense of that title. We are tempted to call the figure "a caricature"; perhaps that word is too strong, no doubt the type is in substance true to life, though there may be a certain amount of necessary exaggeration. The author is an artist, as is seen in the free yet delicate fashion in which he handles this material. The fine descriptive power is easily recognized. We see Jonah fleeing from an unpleasant duty, paying his fare, going below, and seeking the sleep that weariness sometimes brings as an aid to forgetfulness. The sailors are busy about their work but they know that some angry god has flung out the great wind to cause such a

violent storm. The "salts," the "tars" toil hard to bring the ship to land, lest, though the sinner has confessed his guilt, they may perchance make a mistake and bring upon themselves the vengeance of heaven by sacrificing innocent blood. The part played by "the great fish" is a mere incident illustrating the folly of attempting to escape from God. The reception of the message of judgment by a great city, from the highest on the throne to the lowest in the street, is sketched with a few bold strokes. In stronger colours we have the contrast between the wonderful mercy of God and the petty peevishness and petulance of a man concerned mainly for his own reputation and comfort. The whole ends on a fine note, with this splendid appeal, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle." Strange situation the God of Heaven pleading the cause of mercy before a frail stupid man!

The student of post-exilic Jewish literature knows that, after the great prophets with their strong moral sense and passionate poetry had passed away, the predictive element in prophecy began to gain undue prominence, and the noble preaching to which our Lord appealed fell into the background (Hosea vi. 6; Matt. ix. 13). This narrow view of prophecy exerted a powerful influence over Jewish and Christian thought during many centuries. It may be that in early times thoughtful men saw the danger of this tendency; for, except in very dull periods, the hardening process, that makes life mechanical, provokes energetic protest. It

may be difficult to imagine a man in actual life putting the question in a form as crude as is here credited to Jonah. But effective satire, if it is to make a popular appeal, must give strong expression to its central thought. It is when set against the kindness of the eternal God that our small self-centred ambition is shown in its contemptible smallness. The writer of the story has pictured the man who prides himself on his knowledge of God and yet is utterly lacking in sympathy for the weakness and need of his fellow-men. His doctrine of prophecy is the supreme thing, his own reputation is of the greatest importance ; and he does not see that the spontaneous " uncovenanted mercies " of God puts to shame " man's inhumanity to man," and condemns the creed that is consistent and cold.[1]

[1] " The Psalm (lxxxvii.) is a miniature edition of the Book of Jonah—the poet's large-hearted universalism looks forward to an abolition of national jealousies." R. A. Stewart Macalister, *The Philistines*, etc., p. 70.

XXVI. THE STORY-TELLING ELEMENT IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

It is not necessary in this connexion to give even a brief summary of the arguments, linguistic, literary, historical and theological, that have led the great majority of special students to the conviction that this book, in its final form, is the product and reflection of the great events of the Maccabean period.[1] What we are more interested in is the fact that, from our point of view, we may say that here we meet some of the *latest* stories in the Old Testament. The nature and style of the stories might indeed be more fully recognized as one of the signs of the relatively late date of the book. The stories in Daniel, though they show the influence of earlier stories, stand nearest in their form, style and spirit to the narratives of post-canonical books. Of the apocryphal books it has been said that they resemble this Book—"in their style, rhetorical rather than poetic, stately rather than ecstatic, diffuse rather than pointed, and wholly inferior to the prophets in depth and power;—in the use of an apocalyptic method, and the strange combination of dreams and symbols;—in the insertion, by way of embellishment, of speeches and formal documents which can at the best be only semi-historical;—finally, in the whole tone of thought, especially in the quite peculiar doctrine of archangels,

[1] *See* the Bibliography.

of angels guarding kingdoms, and of opposing evil spirits. In short, the Book of Daniel may be illustrated by the apocryphal books in every single particular. In the adoption of the illustrious name—which is the most marked characteristic of this period—it resembles the *additions* to the Book of Daniel, the Books of Esdras, the letters of Baruch and Jeremiah and the Wisdom of Solomon. In the imaginary and quasi-legendary treatment of history it finds a parallel in Wisdom xvi.–xix., and parts of the second Book of Esdras. As an allusive narrative bearing on contemporary events under the guise of describing the past, it is closely parallel to the Book of Judith, while the character of Daniel bears the same relation to that of Joseph, as the representation of Judith does to that of Jael. As an ethical development of a few scattered historical data, tending to the marvellous and supernatural, but rising to the dignity of a very noble and important religious fiction, it is analogous, though incomparably superior, to Bel and the Dragon, and to the stories of Tobit and Susanna." [1]

Though the book is generally admitted to be a unity the narratives, dreams and visions having the same spirit and purpose, it is possible to study the stories separately without entering into the complicated question of the detailed interpretation of the visions, or discussing the separate origin of the stories. It is a misfortune that in recent years the popular exposition of the book has been left so much to those who seek in it information concerning the early end of the present world. This has repelled many who have no sympathy with these wild speculations. It is clear that scarcely anywhere is there such a wide cleavage between the

[1] Farrar, p. 84.

view now held by scholars and the traditional view of this book, which treats it as containing literal history of the Babylonian period, and predictions that reach to the end of time. But to believe that one of the most fateful periods in the history of later Judaism has reflected its struggles and achievements in these wonderful stories should not lessen our interest in the book or dim the glory of that heroic loyalty that saved the ancient Church in one of its most critical hours. It was according to the genius of the Hebrew people that splendid stories should gather round the brilliant periods of the nation's history and enshrine experiences of the sorrowful ordeals through which the religion passed.

The Babylonian exile, in the sixth century B.C., marked a great crisis in the national and religious life of the Jews. The nation was broken to pieces; from the ruins there arose a community that was more of the nature of a church than a nation. How nobly this community did its work, in spite of unavoidable narrowness and hardness, may be seen in the later literature of reflection and worship (Job and Psalms). The post-exilic community was small, but Jerusalem must have been the centre of intense and varied ecclesiastical and spiritual activities. Though we have no full description of the experiences of the Babylonian exiles, we know that there they had to face the question, "How can we sing Yahweh's song in a foreign land?" (Ps. 137). This problem, how can a religion deeply rooted in the soil of a particular country maintain its life in a foreign atmosphere without the aid of temple or priest—this problem they did solve to some extent, and their religion gained something in spirituality, and it advanced through painful experience towards the

universality that was its destiny. Ezekiel we know and the nature of his ministry in the foreign land; he is concerned with the fate of Jerusalem and with the life, present and future, of his own people. He seems to have been quite free to minister to members of his own race, and he had to learn the lesson that skilful oratory does not ensure spiritual success. "And, lo, thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument, for they hear thy words but they do them not" (xxxiii. 31). He, like all speakers who make an effective appeal to the common people, used striking symbols, instructive allegories and richly decorated visions, but they were not of this particular type. With all his concern for ritual and his elaborate eschatology Ezekiel has still the living voice of a real prophet. The period in which he lived was a time of national disaster, a political calamity, aggravated by the blindness and fanaticism of leaders who would not listen to the prophetic warnings. What the Babylonian Exile showed was, that in a nation that seemed so hopelessly ruined there were spiritual elements that could survive and through bitter sorrow reach a larger life.

The events that shine through the stories of this book are of a different kind and betray an altogether different situation. It was not the stupendous nature of the miracles that led Christian scholars to surrender the tradition that had reigned so long, but the natural result of placing the book in the historical setting to which it evidently belonged, through the study of a period that had not hitherto received due attention. "But," as the Jewish writer Dr. Jael truly says, "the unveiling of the secret as to the real lateness of its date and origin, so far from causing any loss in its beauty and

interest, enhances both in a remarkable degree. It is thus seen to be the work of a brave and gifted anonymous author about 167 B.C., who brought his piety and patriotism to bear on the fortunes of his people at an epoch in which such piety and patriotism were of priceless value. We have in its later sections no voice of enigmatic prediction, foretelling the minutest complications of a distant secular future, but mainly the review of contemporary events by a wise and an earnest writer whose faith and hope remained unquenchable in the deepest night of persecution and apostasy." [1]

Thus students were driven to the conclusion that Daniel and his companions are not a small band of heroes in Babylon but symbolic representatives of the nation that was suffering in Palestine its first great religious persecution. There is no longer need to discuss the miracle of three men cast into a fiery furnace and coming out alive. It was the whole nation that was thrown into the fiery furnace and many brave men and gentle women lost their lives in an apparently hopeless struggle. They gave their lives that their religion might continue to live. Looked at from the point of view of national resources and military equipment their case did indeed seem hopeless. For a long time they had been spending all their energies in building their temple, strengthening their city, studying the Law and perfecting their ritual; then, they were called to take the field and show that "the saints" can fight. Even "the pacifists" among them were compelled to accept the challenge and face the inevitable conflict. Though the new and perfect kingdom of humanity did not come as soon as they expected, and still seems to be "a far-off divine event," what they did accomplish was

[1] Farrar, p. 37.

of permanent significance for Judah and the world; the hope that cheered them in their darkest hours has helped many martyrs in similar situations. Surely, as we read these stories, we must feel that precise cold prose is not the most appropriate form in which to express such great realities: they need symbols that stimulate the imagination, so that the event is seen no longer as a small local affair, racial and parochial, but as a conflict between opposing forces incarnate not merely in Jews and Greeks of a particular period, but in all men at all times.

The clash between Judaism and Hellenism in the second century before the Christian Era is one of the important events in the religious life of the world. The Judaism had become hard; in building a strong barrier between itself and the outside world it tended to rouse suspicion and hostility. The Hellenism that prompted the final brutal attack was of a spurious degenerate kind. But it is still true that two different views of religion and life came into conflict with tragic results. The striking contrasts presented in the gorgeous pictures of the Book of Daniel between a simple, severe monotheistic faith and a magnificent, sensuous, tyrannical idolatry are essentially true. Before the storm broke upon the little community with its relentless fury, Greek influence had long been at work, in quiet subtle ways, with such "peaceful penetration" that those faithful to the Law had to face division within as well as persecution from without. The mad attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to crush Judaism saved and strengthened it when it was in danger of being slowly sapped by insidious foreign influence. The author of Daniel does not glorify the heroic deeds of the soldiers and clever diplomacy of the statesmen who displayed

such wonderful bravery in battle and skill in political intrigue; he ascribes all the glory to God who gives courage and wisdom to those who put their trust in Him. When we have become familar with the tendency of ancient historians to crystallize the achievements and significance of a particular period around a great name, an impressive personality, we need not be surprised that here we have the battle against idolatry, the struggle for religious freedom represented by the conduct of a few faithful men who in an alien atmosphere preserved the simplicity and purity of their faith.

I. Faithfulness to the Law. Chap. i.

Devotion to the Law was one of the most powerful forces that built up the post-exilic Jewish community in Jerusalem. The Torah or Books of Moses, especially the priestly ritualistic element in the middle books, was the charter of the Jewish Church and the code of the temple worship. There were careless members of the community and others who combined purity and breadth, but the general tendency was toward legalistic zeal and strict scrupulosity. As we know when the great struggle came, "the Greek peril," it was not the priests who saved the religion but a band of brave patriots and a class of laymen who were zealous students and defenders of the Law. A few philosophers of the type of "the preacher" may have come to the conclusion that there was nothing worth fighting for, but the patriots prized national independence and "the godly" were ready to die for their faith. We may read their noble tribute to the Law in Ps. xix. 7 ff. and note the praise of the man who painfully studies that Law in Ps. i. and also admire the ingenuity of the wonderful, if

somewhat artificial, composition Ps. cxix. From the latter an appropriate motto for this chapter might be chosen.

> Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
> By taking heed according to thy word.

Here we have the story of young men who have learned the great lesson of obedience to the Law and found in that severe discipline safety and strength. Here is an everlasting lesson, but its form changes. The Christian revelation brought a measure of emancipation from the ritual of Judaism, which had become a form of slavery. But that need not hinder the recognition of the historical fact that the Law was at one time a noble discipline, that this intense devotion saved the Jewish Church in its hour of deadly peril, and that it has given cohesion and tenacity to orthodox Judaism during many centuries of persecution. For those who desire "facts," there are plenty available in this as in other stories. Young men were deported from Jerusalem at various times (cf. the case of Ezekiel); Jews did attain high positions at foreign courts (Nehemiah); these courts were scenes of luxury, intrigue and temptation in many forms; young men trained for service in a royal household had to submit to special forms of education; the science of that day concerned itself largely with divination and other things that we now call "superstitious." All these things appear in the story of the young Hebrew at the court of Nebuchadnezzar and are true to the actual history of the time. Intelligent men regarded the ritual rules not as mere arbitrary decrees, but as a discipline which was good for body and soul; through the strict observance of them men were not only kept from the taint of heathen-

ism, they attained a wholesome, healthy condition of body and clearness of mental vision. This is reflected in the independent courageous action of the young patriots. Whether it is an earlier story adapted to the trials of the Maccabean period or was written completely by the author of Daniel, the history of that age gives to it a living reality and powerful application. "And the king (Antiochus Epiphanes) wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be as one people and every one should abandon his customs. And all the heathen agreed to the commandment of the king. Yea, many of the Israelites found pleasure in his religion, and sacrificed unto idols and profaned the Sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the foreign customs of the land, and keep burnt offerings, and sacrifices and drink offerings, out of the sanctuary; and that they should profane sabbaths and festival days; and pollute sanctuary and priests; build altars and groves and idol temples, and sacrifice swine's flesh and unclean animals; that they should also leave their sons uncircumcised, make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: to the end they might forget the Law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he should die" (1 Macc. i. 41). Then follows an account of frightful atrocities committed on women and children. In this chapter there is as yet no suggestion of the terrible storms that will have to be faced, but simply the exhortation by example to plain living and high thinking. The chapter "serves as a keynote of soft, simple and delightful music by way of overture. It calms us for the contemplation of the awful tumultuous scenes that

are now in succession to be brought before us " (Farrar).

The chapter closes with an addition or anticipation which shows the great reward that Daniel and his companions received for their faithfulness. They were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters of the realm. In the following chapter we have the proof of this and the first great exhibition of Daniel's superiority. The resemblance between Daniel at the Babylonian court and Joseph at the Egyptian court has led scholars to believe that the author had the earlier story in his mind. This is well expressed by the expositor just quoted. " The model which the writer has had in view in this *Haggadah* is the forty-first chapter of the Book of Genesis. In both chapters we have magnificent heathen potentates—Pharaoh of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. In both chapters the kings dream dreams by which they are profoundly troubled. In both, their spirits are saddened. In both, they send for all the *chakamin* and all the *chartummin* of their kingdoms to interpret the dreams. In both, these professional magicians prove themselves entirely incompetent to furnish the interpretation. In both, the failure of the heathen oneirologists is emphasized by the immediate success of a Jewish captive. In both, the captives are described as young, gifted and beautiful. In both, the interpretation of the king's dream is rewarded by the elevation to princely civil honours. In both, the immediate elevation to ruling position is followed by lifelong faithfulness and prosperity. When we add that there are even close verbal resemblances between the chapters, it is difficult not to believe that the one has been influenced by the other." That may be true, and if so it was the patriotic writer's way of expressing his belief that in a living fashion

history repeats itself and that the God of the fathers gives new revelations suited to the new age.

II. The Fiery Furnace. Chap. iii.

This is a splendid sermon against idolatry, showing that the faithful will choose death rather than apostasy; that God is able to deliver His servants in the hour when death seems inevitable is clearly stated, but also that even if this did not come within the range of His wise purpose it was better to die than to worship the world's pretentious idols. It is not a story of heroic revolt but of passive resistance in which all the responsibility is thrown upon and all the glory given to the Most High. We are told that when Mattathias was invited to take the lead in offering the heathen sacrifice, "according to the king's command," he refused, and when one of the Jews was about to commit the fatal deed, "he was inflamed with zeal, and trembling inwardly; and he gave rein to his anger, as was right, and ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice he killed, at that time, and the altar he pulled down. And he acted zealously for the law, as Phineas did unto Zambri, son of Salom" (1 Macc. ii. 24). The heroes of the Book of Daniel show wonderful wisdom and undaunted courage, but it is not of this active type. The three Hebrews look calmly into the face of death and say, "There is a God whom we serve who is able to deliver us, but even if that is not His present purpose we will not serve thy gods, O king, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." A splendid combination of bravery and resignation. The writer of this book probably did not live to see the moral decay that set in after the great Maccabean victory, but he was one of those who dis-

trusted military power even when used on the side of righteousness and freedom.

We do not know exactly when the Hebrews learned to dispense altogether with images in their worship, but we know that through a large part of their history the higher religious movement was against idolatry. This opposed the development of certain lines of art, but story-telling, one art that persisted through all changes, is here used with powerful effect against idolatry. Elsewhere we find gentle satire (Isa. xl. 19, 20 ; xli. 6, 7), sharp mockery (Ps. cxxxiv. 15), bitter denunciation (Jer. x. 8), but here the sermon is in the form of a magnificent picture, painted with a big brush and in rich colours. Three feeble mortals set themselves in defiance of one of the world's greatest, most arrogant rulers, and refused to be overawed by the size and splendour of the colossal figure and the splendid pomp of ritual and music associated with this worship. Babylon had all these things in full measure : a city of enormous size, riches and material magnificence, glorious temples, splendid images, elaborate ritual. Great was the company of priests, astrologers and soothsayers. Babylon made a great impression on the ancient world ; it was a centre where the glories of the world in commerce, science and art were gathered to yield homage to the ancient gods and the Emperors who were regarded as their representatives. A few Israelites looked into the face of all this vain pomp and claimed that their belief in one true God was more important than all this worldly splendour. " The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God abides for ever " (Isa. xl. 8). History has justified this faith ; the glory of Babylon has faded, where once was unlimited wealth and unbridled luxury there is utter ruin

and desolation, but Zion has shown that she could survive the shocks of revolution and war because her mission was spiritual and her message true. This revolt of simple souls against the tyranny of arrogant kings and pretentious systems of idolatry has repeated itself in many periods of the Church's life. History gives us facts, and certain great historical figures may maintain interest and exercise a strange fascination over the minds of men throughout many generations. But the poetic presentation of great ideal battles, that show Providence acting through feeble men and using the weak things of the world to shatter the impious plans of arrogant men and tyrannical systems—these by their very freedom and flexibility preserve their inspiring power in spite of changing circumstances.

We need not worry about such questions as where was Daniel when his companions endured the fiery ordeal, or what became of the three Hebrew youths after their great trial and triumph? Popular stories are not slaves to logical connexion; each has its separate lesson and unity of spirit is sufficient. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego play their part and disappear from the scene to reappear no more in history or legend. There is no great need to dwell upon the story of Daniel in the lion's den. It bears clear marks of poetic allegory, it reveals the same great principle how a man or a nation can take the greatest risks and offer the supreme sacrifice in refusing to render to Cæsar the things that belong to God. The historians can find no place for a "Darius" here, and we are not concerned to vindicate the writer's historical knowledge. What a blessing it would have been if there had been only one such tyrant to attempt to enslave men's souls, but in the world's picture gallery there are many such sinister figures

arrayed in royal robes or adorned by priestly garments. Too often the purple robe and golden crown outside has crushed the man within. To reject false compromise and to cast oneself upon the power of prayer, to "dare to be a Daniel," this independence and courage, with patient trust in God, is the only power to keep life wholesome and free.

III. Belshazzar's Feast. Chap. v.

Leaving to the commentators the discussions of ancient inscriptions and variant traditions, and also the riddle of the strange writing on the wall, we simply glance at this powerful picture, presenting in rich colours and highly dramatic form a message for the author's time and for all time. "Our author accepted the current popular account of the fall of Babylon, not concerning himself with its historicity, and recast it to suit his own didactic purpose. These materials which referred to a king or prince of Babylon our author has used with a view to the present crisis. If Belshazzar was overthrown, in part at all events, for his profanation of the vessels brought to Babylon for the temple, what would befall the king who (like Antiochus Epiphanes) offered heathen sacrifices on the very altar of God in the Temple?" (R. H. Charles).

The machinery of the story, if we may use such a phrase, is similar to that used in other chapters, but it does not creak or obtrude itself; there is real life and natural movement. The arrogance of the king who when inflamed with wine ventured to profane the sacred vessels and set at defiance the God of the Hebrews: the crowd of revellers: men and women, rendering homage to their small gods under the stimulus of wine and royal leadership; this time the rebuke comes not

in a troublesome dream but in the mysterious writing "over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace"; the failure of the enchanters and soothsayers to read the writing or show its interpretation, the reminder by the queen that there is a wise man in the kingdom competent to deal with such things, and finally Daniel's success and reward; the great representative of Israel's God stands out boldly in his simplicity against this background of wild extravagance and senseless folly. Dynasties may change and kingdoms perish, but he continues in peace and prosperity secure in the favour of the Most High. His confidence and independence are clearly set forth. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; nevertheless, I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

Daniel then gives a short sermon on the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar, his pride and its punishment, but this does not delay the action long; quickly comes the application, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." Not without warning does the God of Heaven send His terrible judgments. When the mighty ones of the earth join selfish indulgence to senseless impiety they are on the way to meet their doom. God may seem to move slowly, but in the end His action is swift and sure. The history of the world from Alexander to Napoleon gives many illustrations of a tragic end prepared for those who have used their great success to minister to their vulgar ostentation and overwhelming pride. And so the story closes, the purple robe and golden chain pass from the tyrant to the prophet; the warning, which referred originally to the Syrian oppressor, the magnificent madman, is crystallized into an enduring

word, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting," a word that the world will not willingly let die, a word that should suggest soberness, reverence and humility to all of us.

XXVII. ESTHER: JEWISH PATRIOTISM

This story differs from those with which we have had to deal in its comparatively great length; it is a bold striking picture painted on a large canvas. The artist paints with a big brush and uses his strong colours lavishly; he gives a vivid representation of Oriental court life with its reckless extravagance and wanton luxury. Perhaps there is deliberate exaggeration to warn us against a pedantic literal interpretation; even in those slow lazy times, it is difficult to think of a feast lasting one hundred and eighty days, followed by another of seven days "with royal wine in abundance." The scene is not set in some village of Israel or in the Jewish metropolis, but at Shushan (Susa) one of the great centres of the Persian Empire. We know quite well that such a court was the centre where wealth and luxury, refined splendour and gross sensuality, luxurious and restless intrigue were concentrated. The story may be, as many modern scholars think, "a romance," but like all great pictures of that kind it rests on realities: it shows a clear knowledge of the life of brilliant Courts and the nature of imperial politics, and manifests an intense feeling of sympathy with the difficult position of the Jew in a hostile world. There is a presentiment of the conflicts which Judaism would have to meet in the future; this has received ample and awful fulfilment in the course of that nation's long and painful history.

Our present business is with the nature of the story and not with the question of "the canon," but the two things are closely connected, as had it survived outside that sacred circle, it would probably have been accepted and admired simply for what it is, a powerful story. Now, on the one side much painful labour has been spent attempting to smooth away difficulties and to vindicate its historical accuracy; while, on the other, its claim to sacredness has provoked severe comment. One able expositor tells us that "It is rather pleasing than otherwise to see that the compilers of the Jewish Canon were not prevented by Providence from including a little anticipation of that work of the imagination which has blossomed so abundantly in the highest and best culture of our day."[1] This complacent tone may be contrasted with Luther's vigorous statement: "I am so hostile to this book that I wish it did not exist, for it Judaizes too much and has too much heathen naughtiness." This bold criticism has met with a large response from those who have been repelled by what they regard as the secular atmosphere of the book, its narrow outlook and fanatical nationalism. The latest critical editor is certainly not lacking in clearness and severity. "There is not a noble character in the whole book. Xerxes is a sensual despot. Esther, for the chance of winning wealth and power, takes her place in the herd of maidens who become concubines of the king. She wins her conquests, not by skill or character, but by beauty. She conceals her origin, is relentless toward a fallen enemy, secures not merely that the Jews escape from danger, but that they fall upon their enemies, slay their wives

[1] W. F. Adeney, *Expositor's Bible*

and children and plunder their property, etc." A Jew might ask why a Christian scholar should spend so much time and strength on a story of which he held such a poor opinion. To which the most probable reply would be that the earlier Jews and Christians did not hold it in high esteem, but that later scribes, by their worship of it, provoked and justified candid comment. "Maimonides (1135–1204) declared that although the prophets and the writings should pass away when Messiah came, yet this book and the Law should remain. Esther is inserted with the Law in the synagogue-rolls, and is treated with the highest reverence. More targums and midrashes are based upon it than upon any other portion of the Old Testament."

We must, of course, concede that this extravagant praise was not called forth by appreciation of the writer's literary skill and dramatic power, but by the fiery patriotism that is expressed with such hot, and at times, pitiless passion. To remember the fierce persecutions which the Jews have had to meet may help us to understand and perhaps tone down to some extent the sharpness of our criticism. The wonderful collections of curious additions and explanations that have gathered round the original Hebrew story are interesting, in their own way, but they do not come within the scope of our present discussion. Neither need we invade the realm of mythology nor investigate the origin of the feast of Purim. Whatever we may think of the cruel climax, which was meant to teach the lesson that those who conspire against the chosen people will find their wicked plots recoiling on their own heads, we feel that the zealous patriot who wrote

[1] L. B. Paton, I.C.C. For a more sympathetic interpretation compare A. Duff in Peake's Commentary.

the story possessed real dramatic power. The side of Judaism that it represents was turned toward the outside world in a bitter uncompromising attitude, so we turn from it with relief to writings that keep alive the true prophetic spirit and that prepared the way for the Christ.

Such is the influence of a great story-teller that sympathetic interest will arise in each new generation. "So far as its literary character is concerned the *Book of Esther* occupies a position which is quite unassailable; it ranks high among those works of the pen which deserve to be held in everlasting remembrance, and which no lover of good literature will willingly let die." "The leading characters of the narrative are drawn with inimitable skill—the foolish and easily led, though not altogether unkindly king, the strong-minded and heroic queen; the Grand Vizier Haman at once vain and ambitious, selfish and unscrupulous; and the long-headed and conscientious official Mordecai; all alike are so vividly pictured that we seem to have known them all our lives, and to include them in the circle of our personal acquaintance. The plot of the story is worked out with remarkable power, and throughout holds the reader firmly in its grip. Its interest never flags; and the severest critic must allow to *Esther* its right to a permanent place among the great stories, not merely of antiquity, but of all time." This writer finds rest from the puzzle that the story never mentions the name of Israel's God, in the thought that as so many incidents in the story turn out to be links in the chain of Providential guidance, or, as he puts it, the *casual* turns out to be *causal*, and the conclusion is suggested "That the great Unnamed is the ruling factor in human life, though He often

works by means not always easy to detect, appears to be the profoundly important message of the *Book of Esther.*"[1] This is a truth of supreme importance, whether it is read into or out of the story. That it should be expressed in this connexion shows the fascination of the story which begets a desire to read it in the most favourable light.

Our own patriotism is not so pure and kindly that we can afford to reproach the Jewish writer of over two thousand years ago. Yet while we appreciate and admire the book as story, we feel the force of this carefully considered judgment. "Turning now from the facts narrated to the narrative, and the spirit in which it is written, it is remarkable that whereas generally in the Old Testament national and religious interests are commingled, they are here divorced: the national feeling being extremely strong, and the religious feeling being practically absent altogether. In Ewald's words, in passing to Esther from other books of the Old Testament, we 'fall from heaven to earth.' Not only does the name of God not occur in the book, but the point of view is throughout purely secular: the preservation of the race as such, and its worldly greatness, not the perpetuation or diffusion of its religion, are the objects in which the author's interest is manifestly centred."[2] On such points there will always be difference of opinion, as theological doctrines and personal sympathies are involved, but from the point of view of the history of Hebrew stories, here, at last, we have a fairly long story, with close connexions, definite plot, powerful descriptive passages, real dramatic interest and impressive climax.

[1] W. E. Beet. *The Expositor*, October, 1921.
[2] Driver's *Introduction*, Sixth Edition, p. 485.

XXVIII. THE EPILOGUE

It has not been possible to make anything like a complete survey of the varied stories which play such an important part in Hebrew literature ; but an effort has been made to represent the different types, in which are reflected the actual experiences or the religious ideas of the people in different stages of their history. This has called for a certain amount of critical study ; the more we attempt that in a reverent spirit, the more we realize its limitations as well as its uses. But one would scarcely accept the following sentence as a complete judgment : " Biblical Criticism by itself, as has been well said, is like the analysis of fresh water, it leaves us thirsty. But that is no reason for refusing to analyse."[1] Neither Biblical criticism nor any other legitimate process should be " by itself," it is the servant of knowledge and knowledge should be the handmaid of piety. Without demanding too much from the critic one may prefer the following presentation of the case : " Science, like a child pulling a flower to bits, is apt to dissect more than it reconstructs, and to lose in its analysis the vision of unity and harmony which the artist has ever before his eyes. But if the artist has patience, he will often find that science restores the unity with more meaning in it than before."[2] In other words : " By showing how deeply

[1] McNeile's *Exodus*, cvii.

[2] J. A. Thomson's *The Bible of Nature*, p. 141.

their roots are embedded in their own times, true criticism enables us to see a true possession for all time. And the book, which is proved to be a real record of life, enters on a fresh lease of vitality in application to life."[1] In this spirit the most difficult material yields both instruction and inspiration.

We recognize frankly that we are studying a book written by people of the Semitic race, and this must be borne in mind, not only with regard to local colour and modes of speech, but also in connexion with their view of the world and the essential features of their thought. This calls for a wholesome effort to escape, at times, from our peculiar modern conceptions that we may enter into sympathetic communion with men whose life and circumstances seem, at first sight, to be far removed from our own. It has been necessary to lay stress on the fact that the struggle against idolatry, the movement towards faith in *one* God, and the prophetic teaching with its demand for a nobler piety —that these converging lines of progress narrowed the life of the Hebrew from the artistic point of view. Like all living peoples they had real dramatic instincts and artistic impulses, and, as a result, these specific forms of life were forced into two channels, poetry and story. The most original prophecy is presented in poetry ; and the best stories may be called " poetic," though they make only a sparing use of metrical forms. The stories have their own character and repay separate study. If we believe that God reveals Himself in the great complex movement of human life, there is no need of elaborate apologetic to prove once more that He fulfils Himself in many ways.

It may be partly due to our long familiarity with

[1] Dr. G. Milligan, of Glasgow.

these narratives that they give us the impression of soberness in comparison with the luxuriant mythologies of other ancient nations, but that is not the whole story. Surely the man of science made a slip when he called the creation of woman out of the rib of a man a "monstrous legend" or a "preposterous legend."[1] It would, of course, be monstrous to demand faith in the literal acceptance of this statement as a scientific dogma, but as legend, a poetic presentation, simple and suggestive in its symbolism, it is beautiful. The stories move in an antique world not yet divided into distinct realms of science and art, but there is little that we can call "grotesque." In addition to the fact that the religious movement led to rejection of certain alien elements and to the purification of others, we have to admit that there was a certain plainness or hardness of mind that was characteristic of the Hebrews. They were not inventive, they had not attained the flexibility, subtlety and delicacy which marks the best representatives of the modern Jewish philosopher, poet or story-teller. Could the peace and prosperity of the time of Solomon have continued indefinitely, the literary development might have been different. But the quarrels that sapped the life of the nation and rendered it an easy prey to external foes by reducing its size tended to narrow the outlook and concentrate the energies of earnest men on the ecclesiastical problems. Thus the later poetry and stories become more definitely theological. Compare the Song of Deborah with Psalm cxxxix. or the earlier stories with the scenes pictured in the book of Daniel. True, we must not make our distinctions too absolute; there is a living relationship between the simplicity of

[1] Huxley.

the earliest days and the puritanism of later times.

We are compelled to recognize that within this millennium, from 1200 to 200 B.C., there is a history of the story-telling art that can be dimly discerned. This does not mean that there is a definite progress that can be set forth with mathematical accuracy, in such a way that the later stories are, in any real sense, better than the earlier ones; as a matter of fact primitive stories with their unconscious art have a noble combination of strength and simplicity, a charm and attraction which are difficult to preserve or imitate in more reflective periods. But there is change which is caused not only by the different kinds of life reflected in the stories, but also by the demand for larger literary expression, and later art becomes equal to new tasks. When we consider the single stories which deal with great questions (Gen. ii., iii., xi.), or present a great picture with its lesson (Gen. xxii.), we marvel that so much is stated or suggested in such short space; we are impressed with the vividness of description, the fine distribution of the parts, the orderly approach to a real climax. They could easily be carried in the memory, and their power would be increased when spoken to eager listeners in deliberate dramatic speech. When the literary age comes and a larger enterprise is undertaken, different stories are placed side by side, not merely to preserve them but also to form a larger whole. Those grouped around the name of Abraham form an imperfect suggestion of a biography. We have to admit that here the effect is somewhat hindered by the intrusion of notes and chronology from the later priestly school, prosaic and schematic in character. The Isaac cycle has duplications and the central figure is lacking in original features; note, however, the

splendid picture of Oriental life in Gen. xxiv., when Abraham's servant is sent to seek a wife for his son.

The wonderful strength of the Jacob stories is apparent; and the beautiful stories that have gathered round the name of Joseph must be included in the comprehensive survey of the patriarch's career. With all the repetitions and later additions there is a suggestion of unity, which perhaps we are inclined to exaggerate because we have so long had in mind the impression of the life of Jacob as a type of the divine discipline by which a man is weaned from low cunning and crooked ways and brought by sorrow to a deeper, nobler view of life.

A Jewish scholar, who admits that the stories had an independent origin, arranges the different parts of the cycle into scenes and claims that "the compilers have done their work well, and displayed artistic powers of the highest order. With a few masterful strokes they have depicted the two characters most effectively. "Esau's character is simple, and stamped him as unfit and hopeless for the acceptance and fulfilment of the obligations of the birthright. He is a materialist through and through, without the slightest possibility of such change of character as might fit him for the birthright."[1]

"On the other hand, Jacob's character is complex. Two forces are already struggling within him for the mastery. If the evil, selfish, deceitful nature prevail, Jacob is destined by his very powers to become a curse to mankind. But if the more spiritual side of his nature, his ambition for leadership, power, and honour, can be purified of its selfishness, and can be applied to proper ends, he is destined to become a

[1] Morgenstern.

blessing unto mankind, and truly worthy of the birthright of his fathers. At the present moment the evil nature is in the ascendancy, and the prospect of his regeneration seems dark and hopeless. The episode of the birthright, and the sequel, the episode of the father's blessing, constitute a most effective and dramatic introduction to the whole story of Jacob's purification and preparation for the real birthright." There is no need to complain that one who adopts the methods of modern criticism can still cling to such a lofty interpretation. It shows what we have seen before, that the power and beauty of the stories are not destroyed by the most drastic criticism.

It was not possible to treat in detail the varied stories, full of interest and charm, that have been gathered round the name of Joseph, Jacob's favourite son.[1] Our Jewish scholar has a high appreciation of the literary merit of this collection of stories, though on the question of historicity he is compelled to admit that " the answer, established by science, is that the story is a beautiful romance through and through, with very little historical basis." He finds traces of Egyptian influence from the case of a Semite who held a high position in Egypt and can say, " Certainly the episode of Potiphar's wife is borrowed directly from Egyptian literature."[2] He divides the story into five parts, the boy and his relation to his brothers, Joseph in Potiphar's house, in prison, Joseph the viceroy, and his first meeting with his brothers, second meeting with his brothers, and the reunion of the family : and then sets forth the dramatic elements in the story. " Not only may the story be easily cast into dramatic

[1] For the lesson *see* Professor A. C. Welch's expositions.
[2] Cf. Introduction, pp. 47–50.

form, but the dramatic note pervades the entire narrative. The dreams of Joseph's boyhood but foreshadow the actual relations which are later to obtain between him and his brothers. Similarly the casting of Joseph into the pit by his brothers is dramatically reversed when Joseph puts one of his brothers into prison as hostage for the return of the other brothers, including the youngest. Likewise there is dramatic parallelism, vaguely felt by the old, grief-stricken father, but more clearly perceived by the remorseful brothers, who knew something of Joseph's fate, between Joseph's going down to Egypt as a slave, doomed apparently to a life of hopeless toil and suffering, and Benjamin's coming to the same country, and, because of the pitcher being found in his sack, being doomed seemingly to the same fate. They had deliberately sold Joseph as a slave; and now when they would save Benjamin from the very same fate, they are powerless. Dramatically true is their consciousness of guilt depicted, when Simeon is cast into prison, and they feel it to be the just punishment for the wrong they had done to Joseph (xlii. 19–24). And equally dramatic is the scene where the brothers converse openly before Joseph, and reveal their innermost thoughts, and acknowledge their guilt and express their remorse for their crime, unaware that Joseph understands their every word." It is true that in all history and in all true pictures of life there are dramatic elements though the early Hebrews did not have fully developed drama. There is no struggle with mysterious inexorable fate, but a clear recognition of a gracious providence, the God of Israel guides the destinies of His people.

When we come to actual history there is the same

marvellous skill in picturing real life as is seen in the Absalom episode and the account of Solomon's ascent to the throne. History and story continue side by side. The great epochs and crises of the national life cause a wonderful efflorescence of stories. Many a king is dismissed in a few sentences, but the prophet who leads the fight against Baal-worship lives in the immortal stories that tell of his faith and heroism. Genius and religion cannot be always at the same high level, and Elisha, the political prophet, must be content with pale imitations or manifest exaggerations.

In later times history loses its perspective and its power; the personal memoirs of Nehemiah are an oasis in a dreary desert. But story-telling is not lost; the book of Ruth, though small, is from this point of view important, the writer finds it possible to tell his simple tale with something of the ancient skill, but also achieves success in weaving a fine even fabric. If in Daniel we have a series of tableaux, perhaps published as separate tracts for the times, in Esther we find the same breadth of treatment, with a closer articulation, amounting practically to what we call "a plot"; though the name of God is not mentioned, He guides the apparently accidental circumstances that, with a sort of irony of fate, cause the intrigues against the chosen people to recoil upon the heathen conspirators. The use of stories for religious purposes is continued and enlarged under later Judaism, with what we regard as loss of restraint and consequent increase of extravagance, but our study is confined within the canonical circle.

Earlier stories, which would have been interesting from the point of view of history and folk-lore, may have perished; we regret their loss, as all such light

is interesting and helpful; we would certainly be glad to know more fully the material in which the Hebrews found "entertainment" before the line began to be clearly drawn between the sacred and the secular, but we treasure the fragments that remain all the more because they reflect the earnest search after truth and God. Their interpretation, like other parts of the Book, must vary from age to age; we smile at the Rabbinic exegesis, the wild allegorizing, the painful apologetics of past ages, and we cannot hope that our feeble attempts will go far towards perfection or finality. We rejoice that our Bible is not a mere collection of laws or dogmas, but that the life of man is so fully reflected in the varied forms of history and story; for so does God come nearest to us. Hence we believe that these stories will still have a ministry, not simply to children, but to men of all classes and capacities who preserve a childlike heart and do not allow pedantry to kill the poetry in their souls.

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" Written in the East, these characters live for ever in the West ; written in one province they pervade the world ; penned in rude times, they are prized more and more as civilization advances ; product of antiquity, they come home to the business and bosoms of men, women, and children in modern days," p. 9.

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